

ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Vikings: the truth

The creator of TV's historical epic on bringing bloody battles & legends to life

A Merry TUDOR CHRISTMAS

Henry VIII's festive banquet

ORDER OF ASSASSINS

Uncover the Medieval sect that unleashed holy terror

LAST OF THE MEDICI

The depraved world of Italy's grand duke

PLUS

Gothic War

Roman revelry

Battle of Hue

Nostradamus

The Great Depression

SERPENT OF THE NILE

CLEOPATRA

How a poisonous power struggle & doomed love affair sealed the fate of Egypt's goddess queen

Hitler's British fangirl

Why six sisters were torn apart by a dark obsession

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Future

ISSUE 046

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Timeline



*Was William Shakespeare
born early enough to enjoy
the delights of a cup of tea?*

*And did he wear
a Top Hat?*

*Britain's first Prime Minister was surely
at a later date...*

*...but was that before or after the
Great Fire of London?*



Each turn you place one of your cards where you think it goes in the Timeline before turning it over to see if you are right. There is only one goal - correctly play all of your cards!

This game contains 110 British History themed cards and can be combined with the cards from other Timeline sets.

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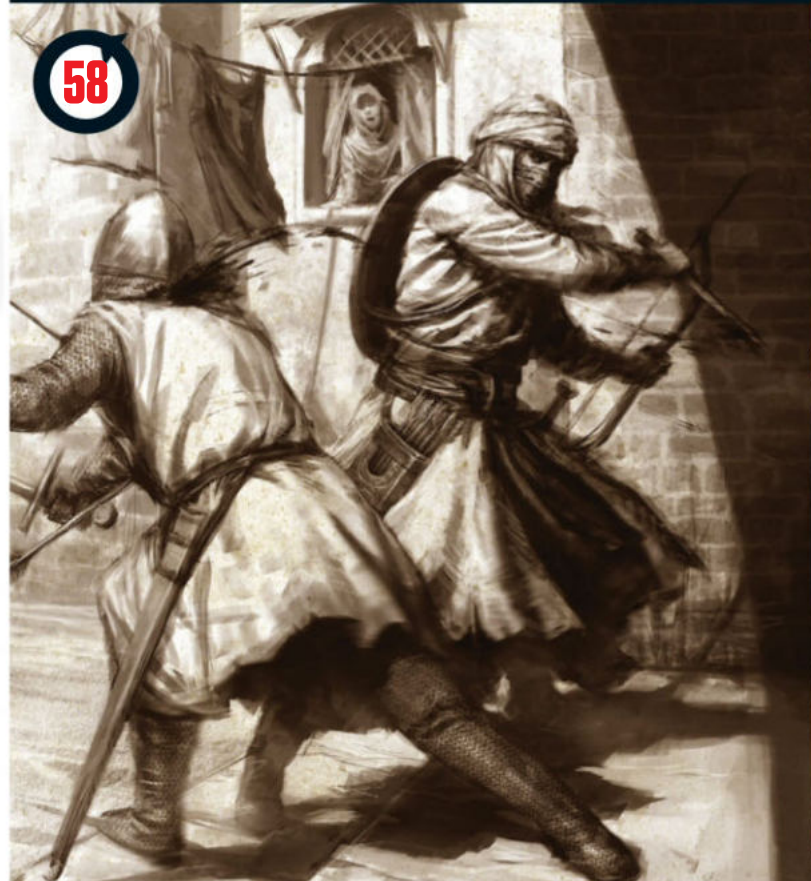
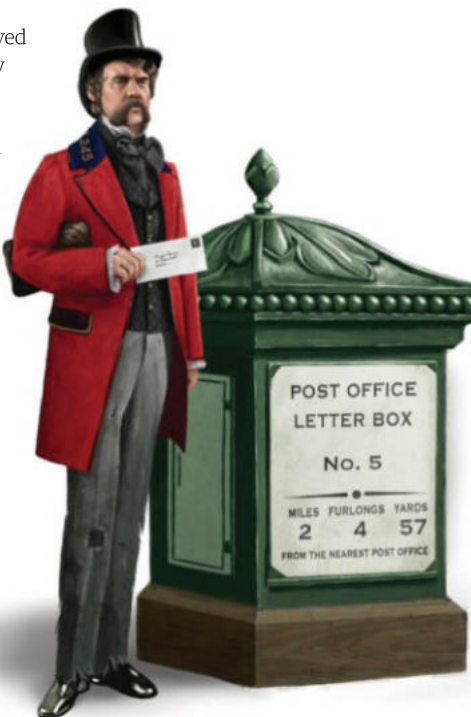
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WARNING
TEAR GAS
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DISCHARGED



HISTORY IN PICTURES

NO MORE TEARS

A mother and child take a stroll during a gas exercise in Kingston Upon Thames in Surrey, England, circa 1941. The authorities used tear gas so that civilians could become familiar with using their masks in an emergency. Rehearsals like this were held throughout the country, as the government expected attacks from enemy planes. Fortunately, no poison gas bombs were dropped on Britain.

c.1941







HISTORY IN COLOUR

ROYAL HONEYMOONERS

On 20 November 1947, then Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten, duke of Edinburgh, were married at Westminster Abbey in front of 2,000 guests and 200 million radio listeners around the world. The newlyweds honeymooned at Broadlands, the Mountbatten estate in Hampshire, where they are pictured here, enjoying a stroll, three days later. 2016 marks their 69th wedding anniversary.

1947



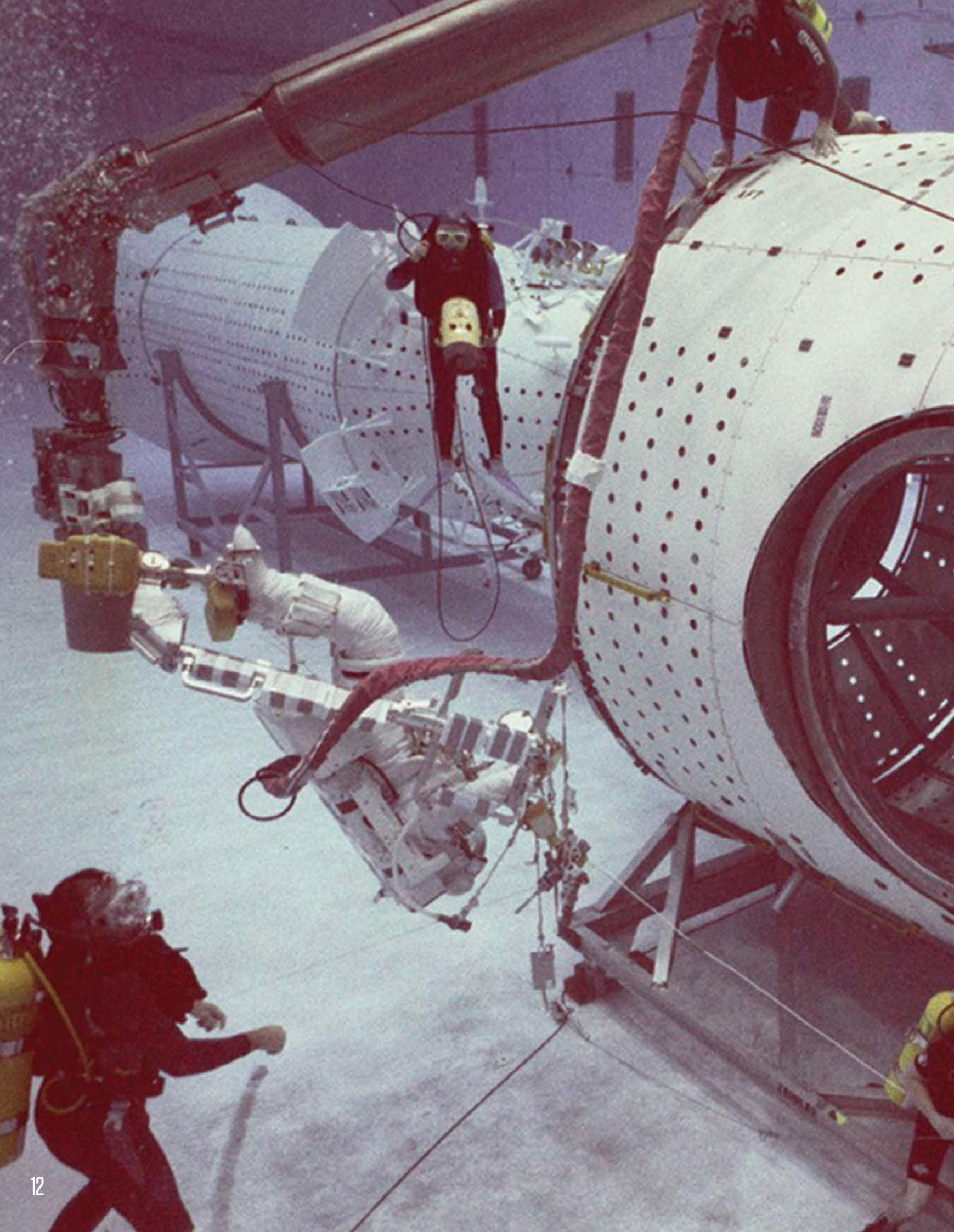
HISTORY IN PICTURES

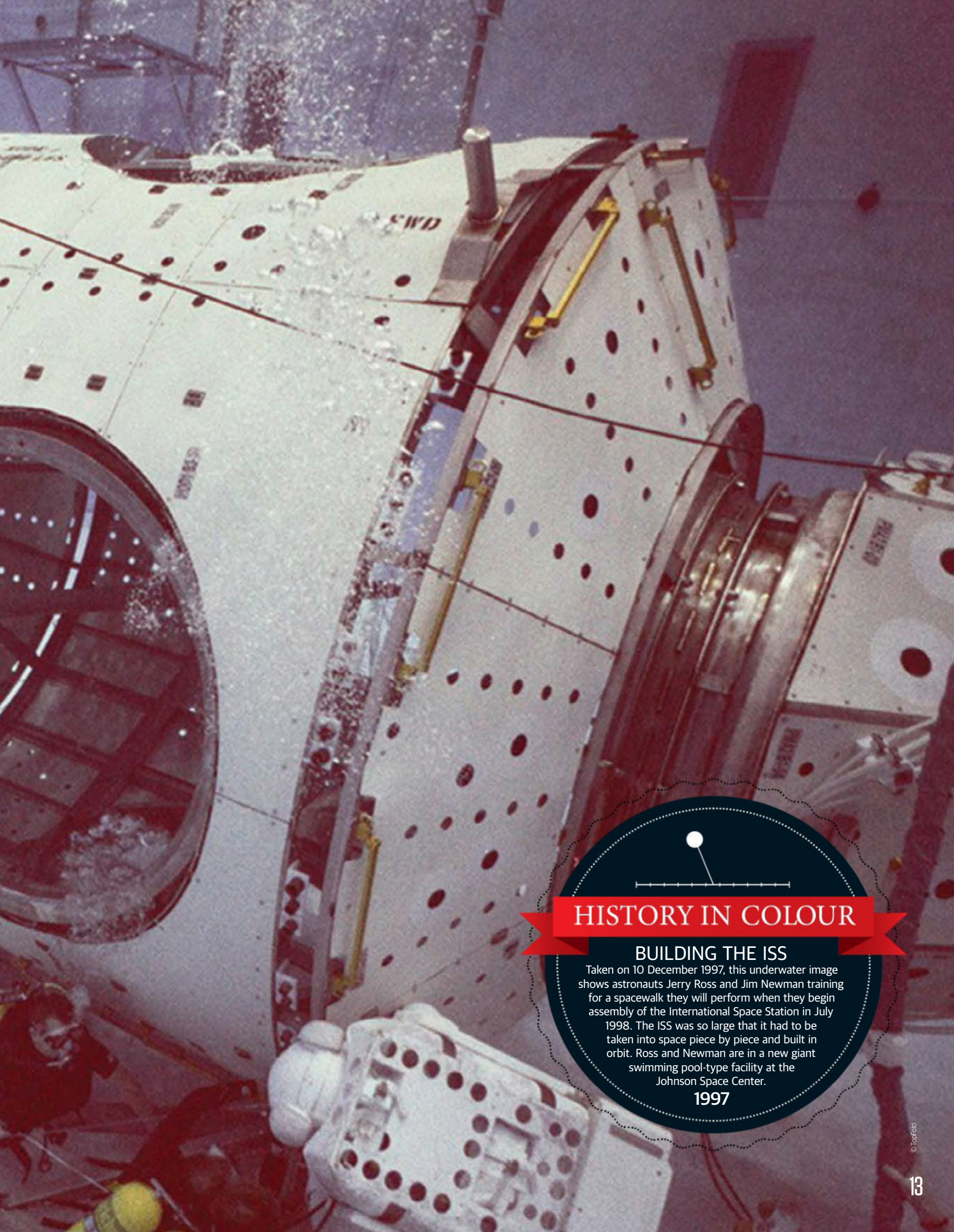
A VERY 'MERRY' CHRISTMAS

An era of national Prohibition in the USA came to an end on 5 December 1933. The ban on alcoholic beverages began in 1920 in a bid to restore religious virtues and purge society of crime. In fact, this period saw the rise of gangsters and speakeasies. When the 18th Amendment was repealed, the control of liquor laws were returned to the states. This photo shows men and women celebrating on Park Avenue.

1933







HISTORY IN COLOUR

BUILDING THE ISS

Taken on 10 December 1997, this underwater image shows astronauts Jerry Ross and Jim Newman training for a spacewalk they will perform when they begin assembly of the International Space Station in July 1998. The ISS was so large that it had to be taken into space piece by piece and built in orbit. Ross and Newman are in a new giant swimming pool-type facility at the Johnson Space Center.

1997

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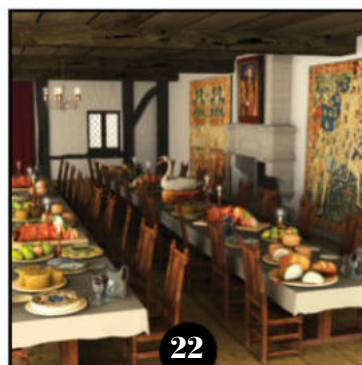
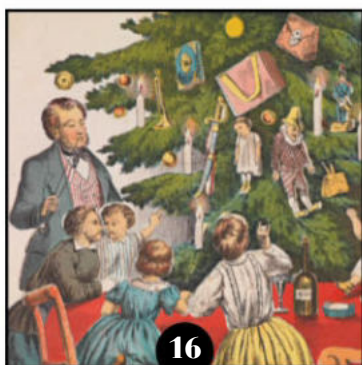
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ALL ABOUT

CHRISTMAS

From Saturnalia to Santa, uncover the origins and amazing stories behind beloved modern traditions





CHRISTMAS

Christmas across history

Pagans, puritans and poets have all had a part to play in the story of this Christian winter festival

PAGANS CELEBRATE SATURNALIA



The pagan Romans celebrate the winter solstice with feasts, gifts and decorations in a festival called Saturnalia. Centuries later, this may be the inspiration for a Christian festival also held at the end of December.

CHRISTIANITY TAKES HOLD



Pagan traditions start to be abandoned as Christianity spreads throughout the Roman Empire. However, Jesus's birth date remains a mystery, as it is not mentioned in the Bible.

A DATE IS CHOSEN



By studying the gospels of Matthew and Luke, Roman scholars estimate that Jesus was conceived on 25 March. As a result, the Roman Church decides on 25 December as Jesus's birth date.

3RD CENTURY BCE

1ST CENTURY

4TH CENTURY

GIFTS ARE GIVEN

Giving presents at Christmas becomes popular in the Victorian era. Shops start arranging Christmas-themed displays in the 1820s and newspapers print Christmas gift advertisements by the 1840s.



TWELFTH NIGHT GAINS POPULARITY

Twelfth Night is celebrated with games, disguises and an elaborate cake. Whoever finds a bean in their slice of cake is selected as the 'Lord of Misrule' and is in charge of the festivities.



WASHINGTON CROSSES THE DELAWARE RIVER

2,400

soldiers are led by George Washington in an attack.

-30°C

The temperature during the crossing.

1,000

Hessians are captured, having been caught off guard during Christmas festivities.



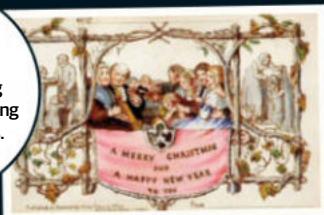
EARLY 19TH CENTURY

18TH CENTURY

1776

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CARD

Sir Henry Cole commissions an artist to create a seasonal greetings card that he can send to all his acquaintances, saving himself hours of writing individual letters by hand.



Postage rates were lowered in the 1840s, helping popularise the sending of Christmas cards.

AMERICANS EMBRACE CHRISTMAS 34 SHORT STORIES

written by Washington Irving describe Christmas as a good-natured, peaceful festival, influencing many American customs.

1870

The year Christmas is declared a federal holiday.

20%

of Americans have a Christmas tree by 1900.



SANTA CLAUS BECOMES ICONIC



Drawing on an 1822 poem by Clement Clarke Moore, political cartoonist Thomas Nast creates what will become the iconic image of

Santa Claus - a bearded, jolly figure carrying a sack of presents.

1840S

19TH CENTURY

1881

AUGUSTINE ARRIVES IN ENGLAND

A Benedictine monk named Augustine is sent to Britain by Pope Gregory I to convert Anglo-Saxons. Christianity spreads throughout England, bringing the customs of Christmas with it.



NORSE INFLUENCES

2 GOATS

pull Norse god Thor's chariot, a possible inspiration for Santa's reindeers.

12 The length in days of the midwinter feast, later becoming the 12 days of Christmas.

1 WILD BOAR

is sacrificed and cooked, starting the tradition of a Christmas ham.



THE FIRST NATIVITY SCENE

Saint Francis of Assisi creates the first nativity scene in Greccio, Italy, to help

tell the story of Jesus's birth.

He uses a live ox and ass and sets up a manger filled with hay.

Hay from the first nativity scene was thought to cure cattle of diseases.

597

8TH CENTURY

1223

CHRISTMAS IS CANCELLED

Puritan Parliamentarians such as Oliver Cromwell disapprove of how extravagant Christmas has become in Britain, and ban feasts and other celebrations. This continues until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.



THE QUEEN FAVOURS GOOSE

After the victory over the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth I decrees that everyone should eat goose at their Christmas feasts. However, only the wealthy are able to afford this luxury for their table.

Elizabeth I preferred goose for celebrations because it was what she ate after the defeat of the Spanish fleet.



CHRISTMAS TREES COME INSIDE



Evergreen boughs have been used as decoration for many centuries, but in the 16th century, German Christians begin bringing entire trees into their homes for the Christmas celebrations.

1644

1588

16TH CENTURY

CHRISTMAS DAY TRUCE

Five months into World War I – when many expected that the war would be over by Christmas – an unofficial truce is called at the Western Front in order to mark Christmas Day. British and German soldiers meet in no-man's land.



NORWAY DONATES FIRST TRAFALGAR SQUARE TREE

5 YEARS

The time the royal family of Norway lived in exile in London during WWII.

15 METRES

The height of the tree Norway donates to Britain as a token of its gratitude.

4 The number of days it takes to dig a hole in Trafalgar Square big enough for the tree to sit in.



TURKEY TRADITION BEGINS



Turkey becomes much more widely available in the 1950s, so it is no longer restricted to the plates of wealthy families. The custom of eating turkey on Christmas Day is established.

In the 1843 novel *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge gives Bob Cratchit a turkey to replace his goose for Christmas Day.

1914

1947

1950S



CHRISTMAS

Hall of Fame

MODERN CHRISTMAS HEROES

Meet the saints, royals, artists and inventors who shaped the festive traditions that make a very merry Christmas

CHARLES II BRITISH 1603-85

In 1644, a law banning the celebration of Christmas was passed in England. At the time, parliament was dominated by Puritans, who believed that popular Christmas activities such as drinking, dancing and overindulgence were sinful and superfluous to Christian beliefs. 16 years later, after the death of Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, the ban was lifted by the new king, Charles II. Gradually, several much-loved Christmas traditions were revived and the festive spirit spread across the nation once again.



Charles II reinstated the celebration of Christmas after a 16-year ban



Queen Charlotte was the first to replace the Christmas branch with a tree

QUEEN CHARLOTTE GERMAN 1744-1818

Adorned with candles, fruit, sweets and toys, the first Christmas tree was truly something to behold. The spectacular yew tree, which had been set up inside Queen's Lodge at Windsor Castle, was the idea of Queen Charlotte, who wanted to lay on a special treat for a children's party at her home. The tradition of bringing yew branches inside at Christmas was well-established in Germany by the 17th century, but when Charlotte came to England in 1761, she brought the custom with her. For the party in 1800, she upgraded the branch to an entire tree, and soon all the upper-class families copied her.

Haddon Sundblom's original oil painting of Santa Claus no longer exists. He had to paint over it due to canvas being so expensive

Many of Sundblom's depictions of Santa were modelled on his own reflection



HADDON SUNDBLOM

AMERICAN 1899-1976

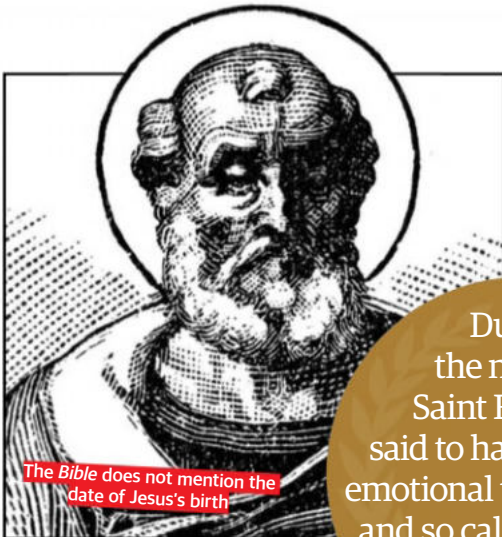
The jolly, rosy-cheeked, bearded Santa Claus recognised worldwide today was first created by Haddon Sundblom. The illustrator was commissioned by Coca-Cola to create an image for the company's 1931 Christmas advert, and took inspiration from the description of Saint Nick in Clement Clark Moore's poem *'Twas The Night Before Christmas*. Some claim that Sundblom was the first to dress Santa in red, the colour of the Coca-Cola logo, but earlier depictions already featured the now-famous red coat. Sundblom continued to illustrate Santa for the company until 1964, and images based on his creations are still used in adverts today.



White Christmas was number one for 11 consecutive weeks in 1942

IRVING BERLIN AMERICAN 1888-1989

The dulcet tones of Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* were first heard in 1942, and the song has since become the bestselling single of all time. Legendary composer Irving Berlin wrote the record for Crosby to sing in the movie *Holiday Inn*, but the track's melancholy feel stems from his grief at losing his three-week-old son on Christmas Day. It struck a chord with World War II soldiers in particular, and has gone on to sell more than 50 million copies worldwide.



The Bible does not mention the date of Jesus's birth

POPE JULIUS I ITALIAN UNKNOWN-352

In the 4th century, church officials made the decision that Christians should celebrate the anniversary of Jesus's birth, but there was a slight problem: no one knew the date on which he was actually born. As a clever marketing ploy, Pope

Julius I picked 25 December, the date on which the Roman pagan festival Saturnalia came to a spectacular end. By choosing this date, the church was able to merge the two celebrations, which they hoped would increase the chances of converting the population to Christianity.

During the nativity, Saint Francis is said to have been too emotional to say "Jesus", and so called him "the babe of Bethlehem" instead



Saint Francis may have been inspired to create the nativity scene by his recent pilgrimage to the place of Jesus's birth.

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

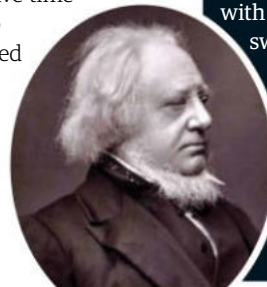
ITALIAN C.1182-1226

The very first nativity scene was established by Roman Catholic preacher Saint Francis when he visited the Italian village of Greccio in 1223. Realising the village chapel was too small to hold the entire congregation for Midnight Mass, he set up the altar in a cave near the village square instead. He also brought along a hay-filled manger and live ox and ass to help him tell the story of Jesus's birth.

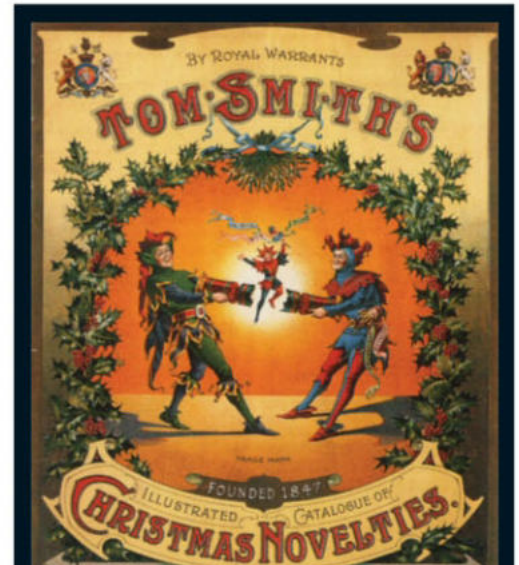
HENRY COLE

BRITISH 1808-82

In December 1843, successful entrepreneur Henry Cole was dreading the thought of responding to the stack of Christmas letters in his letterbox. His popularity and the expansion of the British postal system meant he had received more than ever, and he simply didn't have time to write a response to them all. To solve his problem, he commissioned artist JC Horsley to produce a seasonal image depicting a festive family feast and people helping the poor, then had 1,000 copies printed with a Christmas message. A few decades later, the tradition caught on.



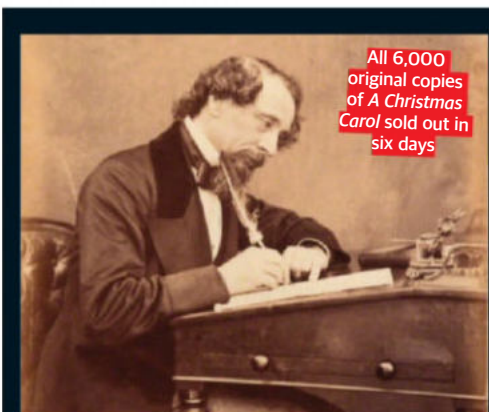
Henry Cole became the Victoria and Albert Museum in London's first director in 1851



After Smith's death, his sons worked to develop the designs and contents, including the addition of paper hats

TOM SMITH BRITISH 1823-69

As he threw a log onto the fire and heard it crackle, confectioner Tom Smith was struck with inspiration. The sale of his 'bonbon' sweets - sugar almonds wrapped in tissue paper - had recently fallen, but he knew a crackle or pop would add more excitement. Inside each parcel, he placed a strip of paper covered with chemicals that, as the wrapper was opened, created a friction-induced noise. Smith's crackers were a booming success.



All 6,000 original copies of *A Christmas Carol* sold out in six days

CHARLES DICKENS BRITISH 1812-70

Although the festive season was celebrated long before the release of *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, many credit its author, Charles Dickens, with making the holiday fashionable again. Outraged by the conditions faced by Britain's poor in the early-19th century, Dickens originally set out to write a political pamphlet, but instead penned a story about the mean-hearted Scrooge and his path to redemption. The book was a hit, and helped promote goodwill and festive cheer.

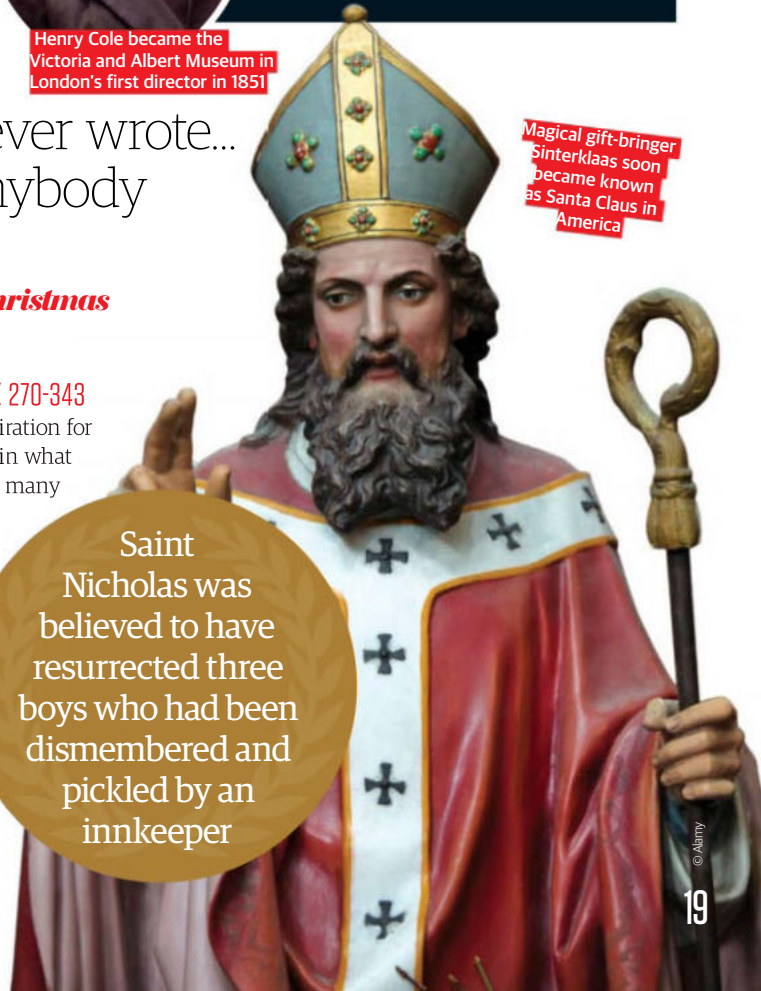
"I've just written the best song I ever wrote... the best song anybody ever wrote"

Irving Berlin on White Christmas

SAINT NICHOLAS GREEK 270-343

The original bringer of gifts and inspiration for Santa Claus was the bishop of Myra, in what is now Turkey. As the patron saint of many different groups, including children, his legend lived on, with stories of his acts of charity spreading across Europe. His reputation as a magical gift bringer was particularly celebrated in the Netherlands, where he was known as 'Sinterklaas'. Every 6 December, the date of his death, would be marked with a feast and presents, a tradition the Dutch took to the New World.

Saint Nicholas was believed to have resurrected three boys who had been dismembered and pickled by an innkeeper



Magical gift-bringer Sinterklaas soon became known as Santa Claus in America



CHRISTMAS

5 amazing facts about...

THE CHRISTMAS DAY TRUCE

AN UNOFFICIAL CEASEFIRE IN WWI WESTERN FRONT, 24 DECEMBER 1914 – 1 JANUARY 1915

01 Carols were sung across the battlefield

On Christmas Eve, British soldiers in the frontline trenches heard German soldiers singing carols including *Silent Night*. The British responded with a rendition of *O Come All Ye Faithful*, and the Germans sang the same song back in Latin. Eventually, across the sector, the two sides warily met in the middle of no-man's land.

02 The sworn enemies exchanged gifts

After shaking hands, the sides gave each other gifts, which took different forms across the front. Food and drink were popular choices including chocolate, plum pudding and plenty of alcohol. Rumours abounded of a pig roast while cigarettes and clothing items were also exchanged. One British soldier even had his hair cut by a German barber.

03 The ceasefire was a chance to bury the dead

While some soldiers happily mingled, others adopted another Christmas message of compassion and used the temporary truces to bury dead soldiers who had lay on the ground for weeks. Many ceasefires began after simple requests to bury comrades, and in many cases, soldiers from both sides helped each other to carry out this task.

04 They played a friendly football match

The most famous part of the truce was a reputed encounter in which British and German soldiers played a game of football, with the Germans apparently winning 3-2. Some have argued the event never took place, but there is enough evidence to suggest that there was at least several small-scale 'kick-about' along the Western Front between the two sides.

05 The last witness died in 2005

The last recorded person who could remember the truce was a Scotsman in the Black Watch called Alfred Anderson. Aged 18 in 1914, Anderson didn't fraternise with Germans, but he recalled the cessation of gunfire: "I remember the eerie sound of silence. We shouted 'Merry Christmas', even though nobody felt merry. It was a short peace in a terrible war."

AT A GLANCE

At the end of 1914, a miracle occurred. Amid the carnage of trench warfare, German and primarily British soldiers put down their arms and celebrated Christmas as friends, not warring nations. All fell quiet on the Western Front as perhaps 100,000 troops took part in a fleeting moment of humanity and peace.

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CHRISTMAS



A TUDOR BANQUET

HENRY VIII'S COURT, 1509-47

Banquets provided the perfect opportunity for Henry VIII to showcase his wealth and impress his visitors with a variety of lavish courses and delicacies. Banquets were as much about display as they were about the quality of food on offer, and the king often hosted them when he was entertaining foreign or important guests. As such, they were regarded as special occasions, and thus for the majority of the time, Henry dined in relative privacy.

All of the preparation for a royal banquet took place in the kitchens under the supervision of the clerk. The kitchens at Hampton Court Palace were so vast that they accounted for a third of the whole palace, and on a normal day fed at least 600 people twice a day. The master cooks were responsible for preparing all of the food, and had a team of about 200 people working under them. Henry VIII's most famous cook was the French Piero le Doux, who impressed the king so much that he made several costly gifts to him. By far the least desirable job was that of the turnspit, who had the unenviable task of turning all of the meat on spits over a fire for hours on end.

Meals began by diners washing their hands in special fingerbowls, and this would be repeated between courses. Napkins were also used, and good table manners were compulsory. People generally ate with a knife and their fingers, while spoons were used for liquids. The king also owned two-pronged forks. The food was served with great ceremony and dishes were carried into the banquet in procession. There would be many courses, and as such a typical banquet could last for several hours. The amount of food the court consumed at a banquet was staggering: it was not unusual for the king and members of court to eat between 4,500 and 5,000 calories a day, much of which came from meat.

Salad

Salads or 'sallats' started to become popular during Henry's reign, and often consisted of an assortment of vegetables. These were usually cooked, and included onion, leek, carrot, parsnip, lettuce, cucumber, and cabbage. Herbs and flowers such as violets were sometimes added, and the salads would then be dressed with oil, vinegar or sugar. Salads were often elaborately served, with the vegetables carved into shapes.

Cheese

Cheese was frequently served at the end of a meal and was thought to close the stomach. It came in three varieties: hard, soft and green. Soft cheese, made of whole milk, was the cheese enjoyed by the nobility. However, the king and his court often consumed so much food that they rarely had room for this final dish, and as such it was often untouched.

Pies

Henry VIII was a great lover of pies, and they could be made in all different varieties, both sweet and savoury; one of the king's favourite was actually orange pie. On occasion, they were filled with live birds, which flew away when the pie was cut. Pies were encased in a thick pastry, known as a 'coffin'. This part was not eaten, and was merely intended as a holder for the contents within.

Marchpane

As the 16th century progressed, so too did the penchant for sugar, which was extremely expensive. Marchpane, a type of marzipan, was a common feature at banquets. The royal chefs began to think of elaborate ways of constructing edible decorations. At a banquet held at Greenwich Palace in 1528, a marchpane of "a dungeon and a manor place" was prepared.



Swan

No Tudor banquet was complete without a magnificent centrepiece, and swan was a popular choice – Henry VIII's court once ate seven in a day! It would have been roasted before being redressed in its splendid feathers, and its beak may even have been gilded. Other popular centrepiece choices were peacocks, and at Christmas a boar's head. Meat was the main constituent of the Tudor diet, and although there would be a selection of vegetables and salads, the main ingredients at Tudor banquets were protein based.

Venison

Henry VIII was an enthusiastic hunter, and the day's kill would often be served at a banquet. Venison was a luxury food item, and was also frequently given as a gift by both royalty and aristocracy. It was regularly supplied to the royal kitchens from the royal hunting parks, and could be served in a variety of ways: as well as being spit roasted in the kitchens alongside other meat, it was often made into pies and pasties.

Fruit

Fruit was often cooked rather than served raw, and the king liked it served in tarts and jellies. Many fruits were also turned into preserves: citrus fruits were costly, and Henry's favourite was a quince marmalade that was so thick it could be sliced. People often gave fruit as gifts: strawberries and cherries were among Henry's favourites, and often graced the table of his banquets.

Wine

Although ale was more commonly consumed in Tudor England, wine was the drink of the royal family and the aristocracy. It had to be imported from Europe and was extremely expensive, and so was classed as a luxury item. The king spent heavily on wine, and all of the royal palaces had their own wine cellars: the one at Hampton Court could hold 300 casks.

Fish

Fish was eaten on Fridays and during Lent, and was supplied from the palaces' fish ponds. It was also served at banquets, and Henry VIII enjoyed salmon in particular. A huge variety of fish and seafood was available, including pike, turbot, carp, lobster and oysters, which were cheap and available in large quantities. Seal and porpoise were seen as great delicacies, and Catherine of Aragon seems to have had a penchant for porpoise. Occasionally, dolphin was also served.

Manchet loaves

Another common feature at a Tudor banquet was bread, supplied by the palace bakehouse. The type of bread served varied according to rank: wheat was considered to be the finest grain, and bread made from this was expensive. Manchet loaves were small and white, and were made primarily for the king and the most senior members of the court. The yeoman baker for the king's mouth, John Wynkell, prepared the king's manchet loaves.

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CHRISTMAS

TOP HAT

A SMART HAT FOR A RICH MAN'S POSTMAN

Before the invention of the Penny Black in 1840, post was only really affordable for the wealthy elite. Particularly in London, letter carriers had to look as smart as their customers, so a fur top hat was issued as part of the uniform in 1793.

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Before uniforms were universally distributed to letter carriers, all workers were required to wear brass buttons engraved with the king's arms and an identification number. When the uniform was rolled out, however, these buttons were replaced with embroidered details on the collar, reading 'GPO' and their number.

BRIGHT COAT

LADIES SWOONED AT THE SIGHT

Harking back to Britain's dominance over its empire, the new General Post Office (GPO) uniform echoed the mid-17th to 19th-century military uniform, a symbol of power and authority. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the uniform proved popular with women, rivalling the widespread appeal of the policeman's attire, prompting one conservative periodical to demand its abolition.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

SEASON'S GREETINGS DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

With the popularity of Christmas soaring under Queen Victoria's reign, the idea of sending season's greetings via post became a reality. In 1843 – just three years after the stamp's invention made post available to the masses – Henry Cole commissioned the first-ever run of Christmas cards, illustrated by JC Horsley.

THE RED-BREASTED ROBIN

THE LETTER CARRIER AND HIS TRUSTY SIDEKICK, ROBIN

An 'uncanny' likeness was picked up on between the letter carrier's scarlet coat and the red breast of Britain's favourite bird at the time, the robin. Therefore, Victorian letter carriers quickly earned a nickname after their winged friends, as their presence at most houses was just as welcome as that of the bird.

SCRUFFY TROUSERS

CIVIL SERVANT ON THE TOP, PEASANT ON THE BOTTOM

While the coat, waistcoat and hat might have been supplied as part of a uniform, the letter carrier had to provide his own trousers. They were expected to wear grey trousers, and often the contrast between the quality of the coat and the trousers was laughable.



A VICTORIAN LETTER CARRIER

BRITAIN, 1855-60



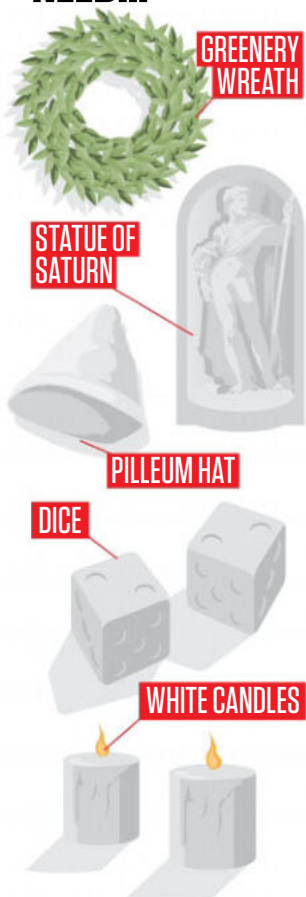


How to CELEBRATE SATURNALIA

HAILED AS THE FORERUNNER TO CHRISTMAS, THE ROMANS LIKED TO PUT ON THIS SPECTACULAR PARTY IN MIDWINTER ANCIENT ROMAN EMPIRE, 217 BCE – 448

Named after Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture, Saturnalia originated as a farming festival at the end of the sowing season. As the celebration evolved, 17 December came to signify the beginning of a seven-day festival of Roman hedonism, culminating on the midwinter solstice that was 23 December. The pagan festival truly was a celebration of misrule, where social order was turned on its head. All executions were cancelled and no war was to be declared. Instead, a sacrifice was made to Saturn and enormous feasts were held in his honour. Homes were decorated, gifts exchanged, and everyone was encouraged to have a thoroughly good time.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED...



"Io Saturnalia!"

The Saturnalia greeting, exchanged like "merry Christmas", was often heard as worshippers left the Temple of Saturn.

Deck the halls

Homes were decorated with wreaths of greenery - thought to symbolise life in the dark nights of mid-December.

Legal gambling

During Saturnalia, any form of gambling is totally legal. Bets can be put on for the whole of the seven-day festival.

Relaxed dress

Men could ditch the traditional conservative toga for a more relaxed, brightly coloured tunic, known as 'synthesis', meaning 'put together'.

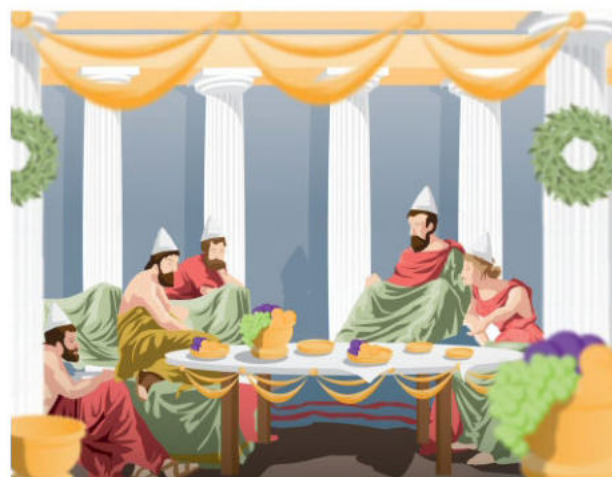
Bare it all

Naked dancing and singing in the streets is encouraged, as during Saturnalia, "All things that are serious are barred."



01 Visit the Temple of Saturn

Crowds gather at the Temple of Saturn to witness the unbinding of the statue's feet. For the rest of the year, woollen bonds wrap Saturn's feet but during Saturnalia they are cut, signifying the freedom of the festival. Sacrifices to the god are also made, and after this follows a public feast where revellers eat, drink and be merry.



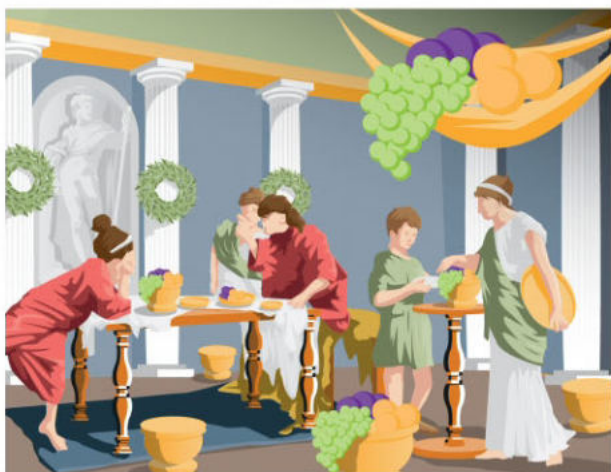
02 Free your slaves

Saturnalia is a celebration of freedom, and therefore all social hierarchy is lost for the duration. Present your slaves with the traditional felt hat of a freeman (called a 'pilleum') and make merry with them as equals for the seven days of celebrations. The roles are reversed and it is now your job to serve them food.

How not to... celebrate Saturnalia

In December 63 BCE, while the rest of Rome was feasting, singing and drinking their way through the annual seven-day romp that was Saturnalia, a plot to overthrow Rome was under way. It had begun in October, when consul Marcus Tullius Cicero was roused from his bed by news that a plot against Rome and Caesar was imminent, led by aristocrat Lucius Sergius Catilina. Once Cicero was informed, he made a series of speeches denouncing

Catilina. These inflammatory remarks sparked the resolution to assassinate Cicero. Under the cover of Saturnalia chaos, 12 fires were to be set and, in the confusion, Cicero would be murdered in his home. However, the rebels had been betrayed and this information reached Cicero before the Saturnalia parties began. The conspirators were caught and executed, and Catilina was killed in battle, ending the Conspiracy of Catiline.



03 Elect a 'king of misrule'

Play a game of dice to select a 'king of misrule'. Whoever wins (even if it is a slave - remember, they are free men for Saturnalia) gets to be the king and set a series of silly tasks that the rest of the party must take part in. These tasks can include cork bobbing, singing, dancing and being thrown into cold water.

04 Prepare a feast

Have your servants prepare a marvellous feast to celebrate the festival, complete with a gilded centrepiece (although you must serve it to them). Ensure that Saturn dines with you by seating his effigy at the table. This is called 'lectisternium'. Or, if you're really lucky, accept an invitation to someone else's marvellous Saturnalia shindig.



05 Go forth and gamble

During the festival, all gambling laws are relaxed. Therefore, you can partake in games at your leisure and openly in public, along with the many other frivolities to be enjoyed like naked and drunken singing, dancing and clapping. Children are also allowed to join in the gambling, using nuts as currency to bet with.

06 Exchange gifts

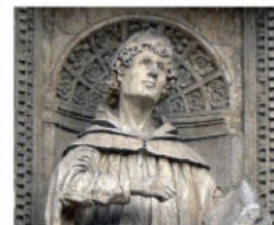
The last day of the festival is known as 'Sigillaria' and is for the exchanging of small gifts and trinkets. You can buy these from various vendors and they are usually little figurines of people and faces made from pottery or wax. You can also give small white candles, called 'cerei', to loved ones, and look forward to receiving your own gifts.

4 FAMOUS... SATURNALIA COMMENTATORS



LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA 125-180 GREECE

In Lucian's poem *Saturnalia*, the god Saturn exclaims, "During my week the serious is barred: no business allowed."



PLINY THE YOUNGER 61 CE - C.113, ITALY

A Saturnalia 'humbler', Pliny escaped festivities. "I neither interrupt their amusement nor they my studies," he wrote.



GAIUS VALERIUS CATULLUS C.84-54 BCE, ITALY

Poet Catullus was an enjoyer of the Saturnalia festivities, calling it in one of his works, "the best of days."



LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA 4 BCE - 62 CE, ITALY

Also not approving of the revelry, Seneca described it as a "mob out of control 'in pleasures'."



CHRISTMAS

Day in the life

FINDING FESTIVE SPIRIT ON THE FRONT LINE

A WWII SOLDIER ON CHRISTMAS DAY, WORLDWIDE, 1939-45

For some soldiers it was just another day of fear and bloodshed, but for others Christmas Day provided a brief but welcome distraction from the horrors of war. Lasting for six Christmases, World War II was the most geographically widespread conflict in history, as major Allied Powers such as Britain, France and Russia did battle with the major Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. Separated from their family and friends, many servicemen marked the day with traditions that reminded them of home, helping to spread a little cheer among their battle-worn comrades.

ATTEND A RELIGIOUS SERVICE

Christian soldiers on all fronts would normally try to mark Christmas with a religious service, typically Midnight Mass, which would be held just before midnight on Christmas Eve. Even some prisoners of war were permitted to have a service. However, those celebrating in churches had to make do without bell ringing, as it could be mistaken for the signalling of an invasion.

DECORATE THE TREE

Many servicemen saw Christmas as an opportunity to get creative, decorating their camps to make them feel more festive and homely. With very few materials to hand, they often had to improvise, making Christmas trees out of whatever foliage they could find and using ration tins, foil wrappings, surgical cotton wool and cigarette cartons to decorate them.

A VISIT FROM SANTA

In an attempt to spread some festive cheer in the army camps, some servicemen took it upon themselves to deliver packages to their comrades while dressed as Santa Claus. Although the costumes were often makeshift and the sleigh was an army truck or tank, it typically worked at putting a smile on soldiers' faces.



Captain Smith, dressed as Father Christmas, arriving at one of the wards of the main dressing station of the Australian Field Ambulance, New Guinea





Pilots of No. 3 Squadron RAAF, on their way to the Army Post Office with parcels ready to catch the Christmas mail

OPEN PRESENTS

Despite the distance and sheer volume of mail, post services did their best to deliver the soldiers their presents from home. In the USA, families were advised to post gifts by 15 October to ensure arrival on Christmas Day, and each package was limited to two kilograms in weight. Popular presents included warm socks, sweets and cigarettes.

PREPARE FOR COMBAT

Ever since the 1914 Christmas Day truce of World War I, which saw enemy soldiers put fighting temporarily on hold, such activity had been banned by many army generals. Therefore, all World War II soldiers had to remain ready for conflict throughout Christmas celebrations, with some missing out on any kind of festive fun altogether.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Although many traditional Christmas foods were rationed (like ham and sugar), or considered too expensive (as was the case with turkey), army kitchens would still try to provide a proper Christmas dinner for soldiers on the front lines. This often meant that turkey was scarce for those back home, leaving families to make do with chicken or rabbit for their festive meal.

SING CAROLS

Singing Christmas carols was a favourite tradition brought from home, as lyrics about 'peace on Earth' helped to lift the soldiers' spirits. Sometimes the latest Christmas chart hits were sung too, with Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* and *I'll Be Home For Christmas* proving particularly popular. The melancholy, nostalgia and hopeful messages of these songs really resonated with the troops.

PERFORM A PANTOMIME

To entertain their fellow servicemen, some soldiers would put on humorous pantomimes at their army camps. There are even stories of prisoners of war staging performances for their fellow detainees, as a method of providing a brief escape from their captive lives. These shows were even supported by the prison guards, who believed it would distract the prisoners from trying to escape.

American soldiers tuck into a Christmas feast in Naples, Italy, 1944





CHRISTMAS

How to make... MINC'D PYES

THE CLASSIC CHRISTMAS TREATS EUROPE, 1700S

Ingredients

For the pastry:

- 900 grams flour
- 4 tablespoons salt
- 200 grams lard
- 300 millilitres water
- 120 millilitres milk

For the filling:

- 500 grams neat's tongue
- 900 grams beef suet
- 5 pippins
- 1 green lemon
- 30 grams sweet spice (cloves, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, sugar & salt)
- 500 grams sugar
- 900 grams currants
- 280 millilitres sack
- Orange flower water to taste
- 3 citron lemons

Today, we know mince pies as delicious festive sweet treats, but the name 'mincemeat' filling hints at the story these pies have to tell. Spiced mince pies were first made in the 12th century, when Crusaders brought spices back from the Middle East. The filling was bulked out with meats like tongue and mutton, and the little pies began to get sweeter in the 18th century as sugar became hugely popular. These particular pies from around 1720 were used to show off at Christmas time. Only the wealthiest of families could employ expert pastry chefs that were able to create such flamboyant delicacies, and so to have these pies at your festive shindig was to keep up with the Medieval Joneses and then some.

METHOD

01 First make your pastry. Heat the lard, milk and water until boiling. Meanwhile sift the flour and salt together into a bowl and make a well in the centre. Pour the hot liquid into the well and beat quickly to form a soft dough.

02 Knead your dough gently and then cut off a quarter to reserve for the pie lids. Press the dough into mince pie tins (you can find festive-shaped ones online - you'll need to get your head out of the Medieval kitchen for this part).

03 Begin making the filling by preparing the tongue. This is traditionally from a cow and you can get it from your local butcher. Parboil it, shred it and then set aside.

04 Prepare the rest of your ingredients: core and dice

the pippins (these are sweet apples of your choice), zest the green lemon, prepare the sweet spice mixture and juice all of the citron lemons.

05 In a large bowl, mix together the tongue, beef suet (also available from your butcher), pippins, green lemon zest, sweet spice mix, sugar, currants, sack (sweet wine), orange flower water (add to taste) and lemon juice.

06 Once your filling is well combined, fill your pies and roll out the pastry to fit the lids. Firmly press the lids on and decorate, and then glaze with melted butter.

07 Place your pies into a preheated oven at 220 degrees Celsius for ten minutes, and then reduce the heat to 180 degrees Celsius and cook for a further 25-30 minutes, covering if necessary. Serve with your favourite mead, and enjoy!





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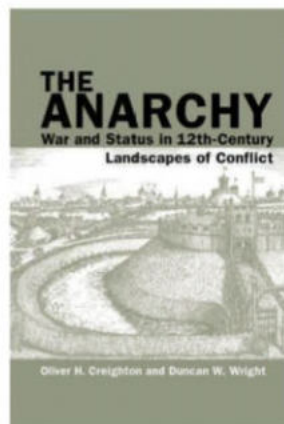


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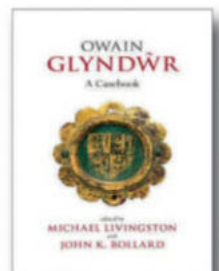
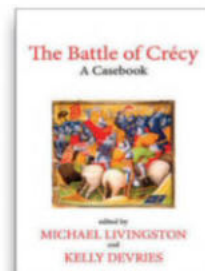
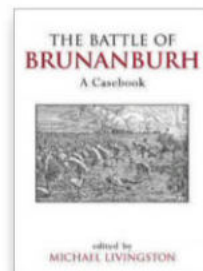
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SERPENT OF THE NILE CLEOPATRA

How a poisonous power struggle and doomed love affair sealed the fate of Egypt's goddess queen

Written by Frances White



When they brought Mark Antony to Cleopatra, he was bleeding out fast. The Roman general had lost the battle, he believed his lover to be dead, and rather than surrender, he had chosen an honourable death and fallen upon his own sword. Hidden inside Cleopatra's monument in the ancient city of Alexandria, Antony lay in her arms as strained, haggard breaths fell from his lips. He was wrong. She wasn't dead. It would be his final mistake in a life ruled by rash decisions. He had fought wars for her, betrayed the state for her, killed for her and now he was dying for her. As Antony breathed his last, Cleopatra was, not for the first time, faced with the death of a man she loved. Their united force had the power to change the course of the Roman Empire and, ultimately, the world. However, the events that had led to that man dying in her arms actually began 14

years ago, with another captivating man and another tragic death.

Cleopatra had worked tirelessly to secure her future with Julius Caesar, forming a strong partnership with the Roman leader. She had also borne a son and claimed he was Caesar's, naming him Caesarion, 'little Caesar'. With her powerful lover by her side, she hoped her child could come to rule a unified and powerful kingdom. She even made steps to live with Caesar in Rome, but her plans came crashing down when the man she had pinned her ambitions to was brutally murdered, betrayed by those closest to him. The Egyptian ruler had been popular while she was with Caesar but, alone and exposed, the hostility in Rome began to close around her, and Cleopatra fled with her love child back to Egypt. There she would need to re-assess, re-group and plan her next move carefully.



Cleopatra fought with her younger brother for sole rulership of Egypt

“She travelled in a magnificent barge.
The sight of her as she sailed up the river
to meet Antony was astonishing”

The pharaoh was not the only one forced to re-assess her position upon the death of Caesar, there was another man whose entire future would be forever altered by it - Caesar's loyal general, Mark Antony. Antony had not had an easy upbringing. Although born into nobility, his father was corrupt and incompetent, meaning he had no strong parental figure to guide him. In his youth he fell into a life of gambling, drinking and love affairs with his greatest weakness: women. Antony was a rebellious, spirited youth and he revelled in the life of excess. It was not until he joined the military and began growing close to Caesar that his life was given order and focus.

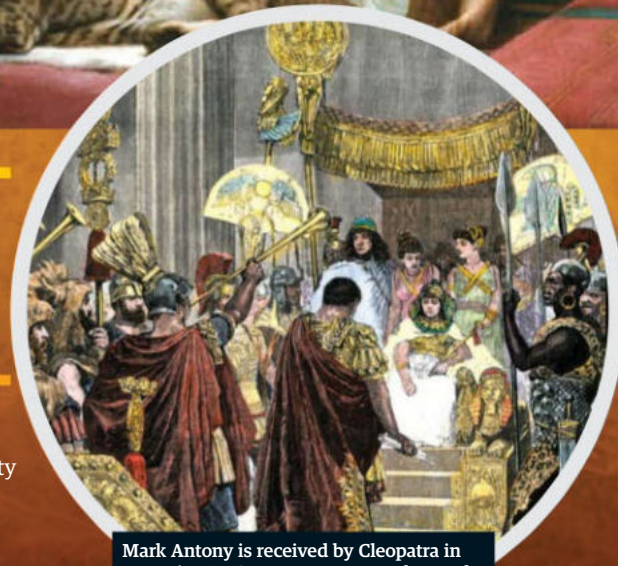
Antony's relationship with Caesar had been anything but stable, but he had always returned to his superior's side and remained loyal, rejecting the offer to take part in the assassination, and trying, but failing, to warn Caesar of the plans. During his time as a general, Antony had gained political acumen, but even in his 40s he still possessed the fiery heart of a rebellious youth, and it was his heart that he followed without question. This passion bubbled over at Caesar's funeral when he was overcome with emotion and, as he spoke to

the people, seized his leader's toga, stained with blood, and sent the spectators into a frenzy. The city erupted into a riot, buildings were burned to the ground and terrified conspirators fled.

It is for this reason - despite his lack of wisdom and subtlety - that his foes began to fear him. Antony was like a rabid animal, and his actions were impossible to predict. The power vacuum caused by Caesar's murder had plunged Rome into civil war, and it wasn't until 41 BCE that vague stability was established. Leadership of the empire was shared between Antony and Octavian, Caesar's adopted son and named heir; Octavian took the western states, while Antony ruled over the eastern region.

Facing the growing threat of the Parthian Empire, Antony wished to arrange a military campaign to push them back, but he lacked one thing: money. For this he set his sights on a powerful ally, and richest woman in the world - the Egyptian Pharaoh Cleopatra. She had aligned with his friend, Caesar, and he was hoping she would do the same for him. He summoned her to Turkey in 41 BCE, his sights set on using her riches to assert his own power.

Cleopatra, however, was no fool. Although she was aware a union with one of Rome's most powerful



Mark Antony is received by Cleopatra in Egypt in 41 BCE. Antony was so charmed by Cleopatra's grand entrance that he chose to extend his stay with her

leaders would be mutually beneficial, she sent out a clear message that she was not to be won over easily. She denied Antony's request for a meeting twice, and when she finally agreed to meet the headstrong man, she ensured she made a lasting impression. Cleopatra sailed from Egypt to Tarsus, and for the final part of her journey she travelled in a magnificent barge. The sight of her as she sailed up the river to meet Antony was astonishing. The gilded vessel boasted purple sails and silver oars that rowed to the gentle music of harps and flutes. The barge was heaving with exotic flowers, scented with perfume, as the lady herself reclined on deck, dressed as the goddess Venus and fanned by young boys, while beautiful maids dressed like sea nymphs sailed the boat.

The sight had its intended effect: Antony was infatuated with Cleopatra from the moment he saw



A GREEK FAMILY OF EGYPTIAN PHARAOHS

Inbreeding and murder, how the Ptolemaic dynasty held on to power

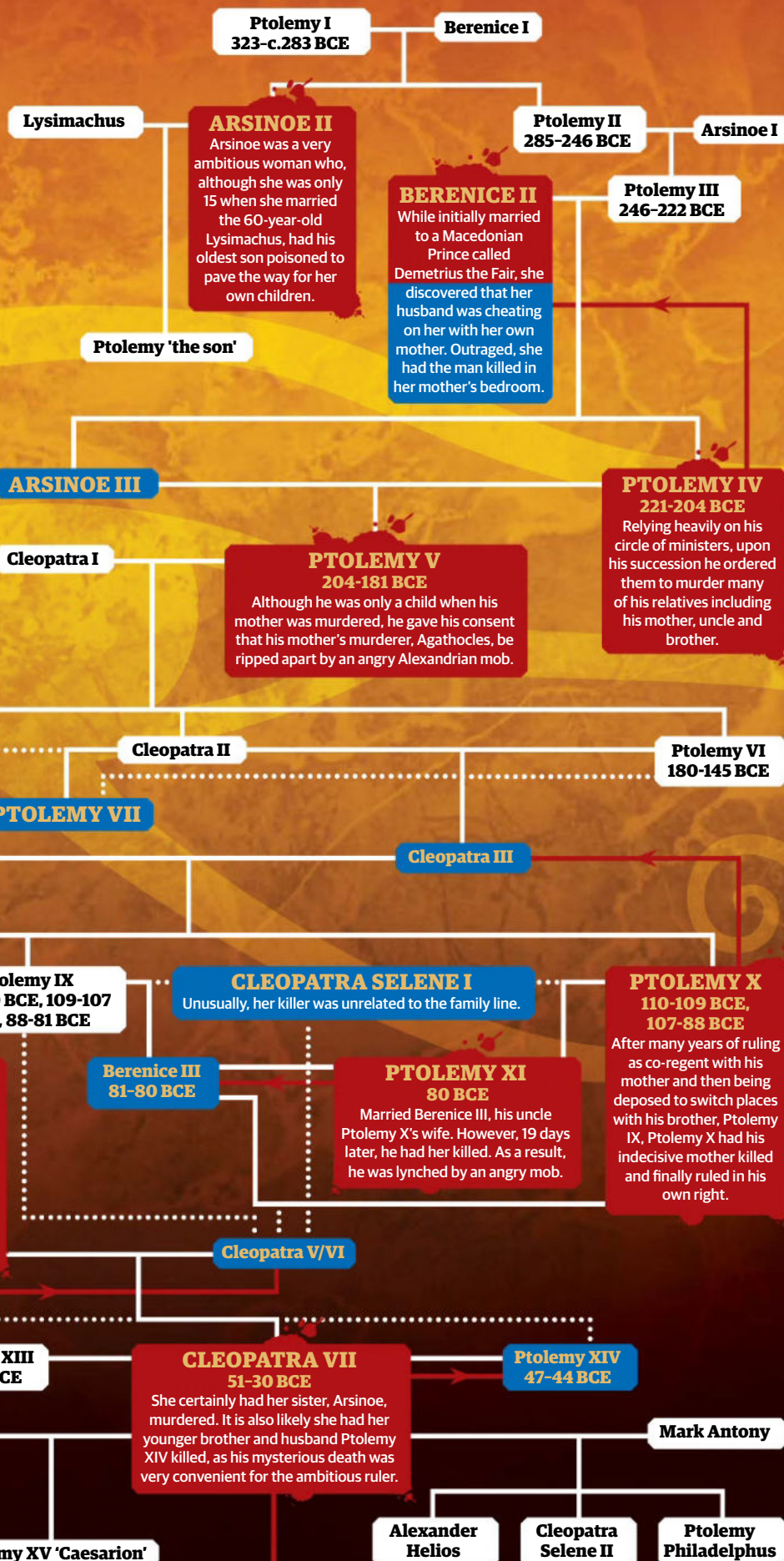
KEY **MURDERER** **VICTIM**

← MURDERED

— KNOWN LINEAGE

..... POTENTIAL LINEAGE

The Ptolemaic dynasty ruled over the Ptolemaic Empire in Egypt, and originally descended from one of Alexander the Great's generals: Ptolemy. Prior to this, the Egyptians had been ruled by their own pharaohs. Ptolemy continued the Egyptian tradition of pharaohs marrying within the family, but this led to debilitating medical conditions down the line. Despite their reluctance to marry Egyptians, the pharaohs adapted many Egyptian customs, fusing them with Greek culture to produce a unique bicultural civilisation.





A relief on a temple wall depicting Cleopatra and Caesarion in Dendara, Egypt

SON OF CAESAR

The child whose paternity began a conflict that would change the world

Caesarion was the ill-fated son of Cleopatra and, according to her, Roman legend and her ex-lover Julius Caesar. Although Caesar himself never officially acknowledged the child, the fact that he allowed his lover to name him after him is indicative that he knew his paternity. Details surrounding the boy himself are shrouded in myth and legend, but it was frequently commented that he bore resemblance to his father in manner and looks. 'Little Caesar' spent his early years with his mother and father in Rome, with Cleopatra eager that Caesar acknowledge his son and make him his heir. However, hopes for this vanished with the leader's assassination.

Cleopatra returned to Egypt with her beloved son, aged three, and as per tradition, he was named co-heir with his mother. The pharaoh was quick to weave her precious child into her propaganda, portraying him as the Horus to her Isis. This image of her son as a divine leader grew more prominent when Antony entered Cleopatra's life. Together they created the title 'king of kings' and Antony also declared Caesarion to be Caesar's true son and heir.

This act is likely what damned the boy when his mother's ships fled at the Battle of Actium. Efforts were made to smuggle the then 17-year-old Caesarion away to India, but through betrayal or trickery, he landed back in Octavian's hands. Facing such a direct threat to his power, and believing 'too many Caesars is not good', it is likely the emperor had the teenager killed, though exact details of his death have been lost to time.

her. He invited her for supper, to which she responded that he should be her guest instead. It was a mark of status, but Antony never said no to a woman. He was treated to a magnificent outdoor banquet illuminated by lights in the trees. The next day, Antony regained some of his male bravado and invited her to supper. He was determined to outdo her but was completely unable to match the magnificence of royal hospitality. However, Cleopatra wasn't interested in wealth - she was the richest woman in the world after all - the few men she had truly loved had all been brave, ambitious soldiers, and she found Antony's wild, impetuous side completely irresistible. She agreed to help him, but she would need something in return, something a soldier and not a civilian would understand - murder.

Arsinoe was Cleopatra's younger sibling; she had reigned over Egypt with their brother, Ptolemy XIII, but when Cleopatra returned with Caesar, Arsinoe was captured and exiled to the temple of Artemis. Despite this, Cleopatra still considered her a threat and wanted her eliminated. She asked Antony to do what Caesar could not and remove her sister once and for all. Antony, in desperate need of Cleopatra's money and completely enthralled by her charms, ordered Arsinoe's execution. In a gross violation of the temple sanctuary, and disgusting the vast



Cleopatra gets ready to embark on her barge from the island of Philae. The island housed a temple of Isis, the goddess Cleopatra sought to emulate

he accepted. She then had a modest, unremarkable meal, for which he mocked her. Then the pharaoh took a cup of strong vinegar and dropped one of her priceless pearl earrings into it, where it dissolved. This story originated some 100 years after the events and is unverified. However, the fact of its existence indicates the perception of the extravagance the couple enjoyed in Alexandria.

Meanwhile in Rome, Antony's wife Fulvia was plotting. In an extreme bid to force her husband

“Antony, aligned with the most powerful and wealthy woman in the world, no longer feared his rival's power or needed his support”

majority of Rome, the woman was brutally murdered on the sacred steps. It would not be the last time Antony was willing to betray the rules of his state for the woman he loved.

This move impressed Cleopatra, and the two did not wish to be parted. They spent the winter of 41 BCE together in Alexandria, not only as allies, but as lovers. Having disposed of her troublesome brothers, Cleopatra was free to pursue the men she desired. Antony, on the other hand, was married to Fulvia, although she seemed far from his mind. In Cleopatra's company, Antony reverted back to his playboy youth, filling his days with lavish riches. Together the lovers played dice, drank and hunted. There are claims that at night they would dress as servants and walk around the city, knocking on doors and causing a nuisance with their frivolities.

Although a rich man, Antony had never experienced the extravagance of the palace. Together they formed a society known as the 'inimitable livers', which drank, celebrated and entertained to excess. One of the stories that has been passed down through history is that Cleopatra bet Antony she could spend 10 million sesterii on dinner, to which

away from his affair, she publicly declared herself and Antony in opposition to Octavian - a reckless action that would eventually escalate into a full-scale war. Antony was furious with his wife for arranging a war in his name, and he quickly returned to Italy to make amends with his fellow co-ruler, Octavian. Fulvia died shortly after, and Antony used this opportunity to marry Octavian's sister, Octavia, in a display of his allegiance. Antony was not ready for a war, not yet.

Cleopatra, meanwhile, was heavily pregnant with Antony's twins and gave birth two weeks later to Alexander Helios (the Sun) and Cleopatra Selene (the Moon). Despite having no option but to watch Antony marry another, she seemed unconcerned. She continued to give Antony the military resources and money he required, confident that no woman, not even the sister of the leader of Rome, could eclipse her. As usual, Cleopatra was correct.

Antony was beginning to have doubts about Octavian's loyalties and could not erase thoughts of his exotic beauty from his mind. In 37 BCE, he set sail for Syria with Octavia, who was pregnant at the time, but along the way he declared that his



Cleopatra's portrayal as a ruthless seductress is mostly untrue and most likely influenced by Roman propaganda

THE POWER OF THE GODS

Cleopatra identified herself with the goddess Isis - the healer who brought the dead back to life - and she wasn't alone. From the earliest recordings of humanity, divinity has been a claim to rule



Alexander the Great

Alexander not only presented himself as a god, he believed it too. He was convinced he was a descendant of the legendary warrior Achilles and the son of Zeus. He believed it was his divine destiny to defeat King Darius III.



Louis XIV

Regarded as a 'god-given' child, France's bourbon monarch modelled himself as the 'Sun-king' that all the planets rotated around. Louis often presented himself in artwork as a god-like figure, playing the role of Apollo, Neptune or, as in this image, Jupiter, the king of the gods.



Francois Duvalier

Also known as Papa Doc, the infamous president of Haiti used god-like associations not to inspire devotion, but fear. He attempted to imitate Baron Samedi, a vodou spirit. His propaganda even claimed that he was god himself.



Caligula

Although many Roman emperors claimed divinity, Caligula became infamous for the way he went about it. He dressed as various gods and demigods in public, referred to himself as a god and even demanded that residents and senators worship him as a living god.




The death of Cleopatra has captured the imagination of artists for centuries with many different depictions being created

wife should go no further as he feared for her safety. Octavia returned to Italy while Antony diverted his course, following his heart back to Egypt. After four years apart, the two lovers were reunited. By now Antony had forgotten any allegiance he had to Octavian and, despite still being married to his rival's sister, he married the mother of his twins. A year later, another child was born.

The two quickly returned to the life of excess they had enjoyed. In 34 BCE, despite Antony's military campaign in Parthian ending in failure, the lovers celebrated a mock Roman Triumph not in Rome, but in Alexandria. They sat together on golden thrones surrounded by their offspring. For his grand finale, Antony finally let any guise of Roman loyalty fall away. He distributed lands held by Rome and Parthia to his new wife and their children, then in his most shocking move yet, proclaimed Caesarion, not Octavian, Caesar's legitimate son and true heir.

Rome was outraged. Antony, aligned with the most powerful and wealthy woman in the world, no longer feared his rival's power or needed his support, in fact, he was so confident in his victory that he had played his hand for all to see. For Cleopatra, this was the result of years of pragmatic power plays and investment - she had erased any allegiance Antony had to Rome, and he was now an Oriental lord. Ever the showman, she wrapped him in purple robes, draped him in jewels and thrust a golden sceptre into his hand. The queen of the Nile would need a

— — — — —  — — — — —

“Cleopatra managed to defy Octavian's orders and escape this world, finally joining her beloved Antony in death”

— — — — —

king as splendid as her, and upsetting Octavian was exactly what she wanted to do.

In Rome, Octavian needed any excuse to rid himself of Antony and he seized his opportunity, depriving Antony of his powers and proclaiming him a man of low morals. Octavian worked relentlessly to turn public opinion against the man who had once been a hero, accusing him of “going native” - an especially heinous crime to Romans. However, he focused most of his attention on the pharaoh to avoid civil war, branding her a whore and a drunk.

For his part, Antony accused Octavian of being a social upstart, a usurper and even lying about his adoption by Caesar. Finally, Octavian declared war against Egypt and Cleopatra. He hoped that by omitting Antony from the war declaration he would not lend his forces to the queen, even summoning him back to Rome several times, but this was a foolish hope. Antony was Cleopatra's completely, and he immediately joined with his queen to fight the war that had been inevitable since the day they met.

Octavian's forces and the lovers' combined fleet met off the coast of Actium. If Antony and Cleopatra's forces could claim victory here, it would be a crucial step in forming their new united empire. However, for a reason known only to her, at the height of battle Cleopatra turned and fled with her ships. Antony, confused but utterly committed to his wife, followed her. This gave Octavian the perfect opportunity to invade Egypt. The self-proclaimed emperor ploughed through the country, and as he neared Alexandria, Antony's armies deserted to Octavian. Antony, consumed by his love for Cleopatra, had ignored a very crucial aspect of war - popularity. One woman, however powerful she was, could not win a war - but armies could, and his foe had them all.

Antony was desperate. He attempted to seek refuge from the invading army in Alexandria, but found none. A rumour then reached him that Cleopatra had committed suicide and, believing it, Antony stabbed himself in the stomach to join his



Antony commissioned these coins to celebrate his victory in Armenia



Antony barely escaped Actium with his life, and he abandoned many of his ships

love. As he prepared to face death, he discovered the truth: Cleopatra was not dead at all, but hiding in her monument. Struggling for breath and desperate to see her one final time, Antony was carried to Cleopatra's side, and there, in her arms, he died.

Cleopatra, although genuinely in love with Antony, was not as rash as her husband. It was not until she became Octavian's captive and discovered her fate was to be paraded as a prize in Rome that she chose death. Octavian, acutely aware she may attempt suicide, had the pharaoh closely guarded. He wanted his victory, and he wanted his prize, but Cleopatra, driven and ruthless, was not going to give it to him. The tales surrounding the pharaoh's death are layered in myth, with the popular belief that an asp bit her on her breast. However she did it, Cleopatra managed to defy Octavian's orders and escape this world, finally joining her beloved Antony in death, and keeping her sacred pride intact.

Antony and Cleopatra's love had been borne out of mutual benefit - together they wished to rule a united world and claim ultimate power. Perhaps if it had remained a union of convenience, history may have taken a different path. However, a stronger, unrelenting force grasped control of both of them, and led to their demise - love. They had desired, most of all, to share their fate, and they did, in extravagance, in war, in victory, in death and ultimately, in history, for no two names are more intertwined than Antony and Cleopatra.

THE DRAMATIC DEATH OF CLEOPATRA

Professor Duane W Roller unravels the mummy of all myths



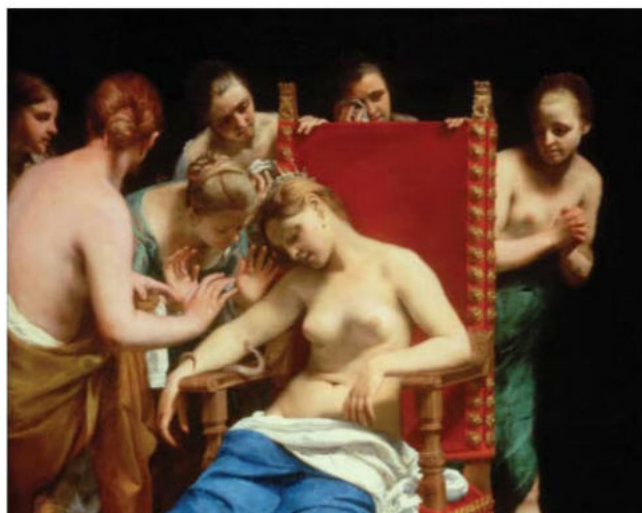
Why is there so much doubt regarding how Cleopatra killed herself?

Although the asp story was

well promulgated within a year after her death, it was already being questioned by contemporary sources. It's a bizarre and unique way to go, which may be why it became popular and why it was questioned. Octavian certainly believed it (or wanted to), because of the triumph and the representation of her in the procession with the asps, but we have to ask: was this part of the drama or real? We know Cleopatra sent a note to Octavian just before she killed herself, but no one ever found it. Cleopatra may have had enough sense of the dramatic to suggest this unique way of death - a snake was an important symbol in Egyptian culture. From a modern point of view, herpetologists have said the asp method is questionable, because a bite, unless in a very sensitive place, is not necessarily fatal, and it seems odd Cleopatra would have chosen an unreliable method. Poison seems much more likely, but doesn't have the artistic and literary quality of the asp.

What was the significance of a snake in Egyptian culture?

Snakes are the ultimate fertility symbol (probably because they



live in the earth - the source of all fertility), and were particularly connected with Isis, which was Cleopatra's alter ego. The traditional view of her with the uraeus and its snakes is accurate; she always appeared at state functions dressed as the goddess. Snakes have always had a particularly dynamic role in Mediterranean cultures, and Cleopatra would have been willing to use this as her last statement.

How accurate is Shakespeare's play *Antony And Cleopatra*?

The play is amazingly accurate, but of course is based on the sources, not the more careful analysis of Cleopatra we can do today. Shakespeare used Plutarch's biography of Antony,

which is the best (and almost only) source we have on the queen, and even though he used an English translation of a French translation of the Greek, he follows Plutarch's account very closely, almost word for word in places, turning the narrative into drama. A close reading of the play shows Shakespeare makes most of the points about her ability that are lurking in the sources, but often have been ignored because of the view of her as a great seductress who drove men to their doom.

Cleopatra: A Biography by Duane W Roller is out now, published by Oxford University Press. Roller is professor emeritus of Classics at the Ohio State University.



The assassination of Julius Caesar, as depicted by Italian artist Vincenzo Camuccini. Following his death, Cleopatra returned to Egypt



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW CLEOPATRA?

The femme fatale is surrounded by myth and legend, test your knowledge against the riddles of the Sphinx



Q. Cleopatra was renowned for her beauty

- ☐ True
☐ False

Correct answer: From what we know from the contemporary sources, Cleopatra wasn't traditionally beautiful at all – it was her charisma and intelligence that brought powerful men to her beck and call.

Q. How many languages did Cleopatra speak?

- ☐ 1
☐ 3
☐ 9

Correct answer: Most historians agree that the queen spoke between five and nine languages, including her native Egyptian.

Q. Cleopatra wrote a book about...

- ☐ Love
☐ Medicine
☐ History

Correct answer: Her treatise *Cosmetics* was concerned with pharmaceuticals, even offering remedies for hair loss.

Q. Cleopatra was a ruthless seductress

- ☐ True
☐ False

Correct answer: Liaisons between royals were very common in the era. The reason Cleopatra became infamous was because she did not hide the paternity of her children. As far as we know, she only had two relationships in 18 years.

Q. Cleopatra was a Roman citizen

- ☐ True
☐ False

Correct answer: Although it's not confirmed, it was common practice to offer citizenship to allied leaders. Mark Antony would have most likely ensured that Cleopatra was a fully certified Roman citizen.

Q. During her reign, Cleopatra was able to:

- ☐ Rescue Egypt's economy
☐ Gain the Egyptian people's respect
☐ Elevate Egypt's power

Correct answer: It was actually the other way around: Cleopatra popularised these styles in Rome and they were adopted by so many Roman women that it is a common misconception that it was Rome that made them fashionable.

Correct answer: Roman propaganda would attempt to display otherwise, but in fact, all of the above is true. Cleopatra was a very astute.

Q. She died from an asp bite

- ☐ True
☐ False

Correct answer: We do not know for certain what Cleopatra used to poison herself. She was known to carry poison in her hair combs, leading some to believe she administered the drug via a pin – not a snake.

Q. Which of these Roman fashion statements did Cleopatra adopt after her time in the city?

- ☐ Roman hairstyle
☐ Pearl jewellery
☐ Neither

Correct answer: It was actually the other way around: Cleopatra popularised these styles in Rome and they were adopted by so many Roman women that it is a common misconception that it was Rome that made them fashionable.



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Time Traveller's Handbook

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

United States of America, 1929-39

The Roaring Twenties that followed World War I were a time of celebration and extravagance. After years of wartime struggle, Americans were free to live life to the full. However, on 29 October 1929, the American stock market on Wall Street experienced the most disastrous crash in history of the USA. The after effects of this devastating event were immediately felt by Americans nationwide, and sent the country

spiralling into what will be a decade-long depression. Many people have completely lost their life savings thanks to bank closures and many more have lost their jobs, with a quarter of the population unemployed. Interventions by the government have done little to help the common people, many of who have found themselves starving and homeless. Now, people must turn to more creative means for economic and personal survival.



FIG.01

WHERE TO STAY

As is often the case in the harshest economic climates, it is the poor who are suffering the most from the effects of the depression. Many of the rich feel little impact, and as many as 40 per cent of people are untouched by the hardship. It would be wise to avoid the various shantytowns or 'Hoovervilles' that have sprung up, as well as towns in the Midwest, which have been savaged by the Dust Bowl. The most secure places to stay are political centres, such as Washington, DC, because of the rapidly growing role of the government, which is supplying many new jobs - a rare opportunity in this unforgiving climate.

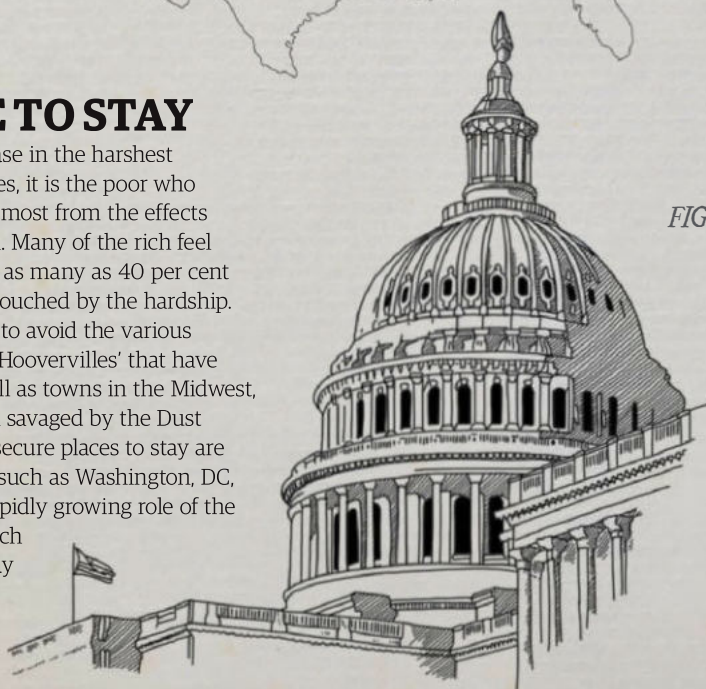


FIG.02

Dos & don'ts



Be enterprising.

You must take advantage of every opportunity for income. For example, some women prepare meals and sell them to workers from their vehicles.



Know when to leave.

Some cities are hit far worse by the depression and unemployment than others. Although it could be difficult, moving elsewhere may improve your circumstances.



Pay with alternatives to cash.

You can pay for things with goods such as eggs, milk and other produce. Everything has a value.



Join government programmes.

The Civilian Conservation Corps employs 3 million men to protect the nation's natural resources.



Forget mental wellbeing.

Many Americans use music and entertainment to escape from their hardships. You can even purchase a radio on credit.



Surrender your rights.

Times being hard is no excuse for social oppression; there are countless social movements flooding the streets in protest, most famously the Bonus Army.



Sit on possible incomes.

Lots of people are cashing in their life insurance policies and even the most insignificant of items can be sold or traded.



Let being in a city stop you.

Many urban dwellers have built gardens for produce in the most unlikely of places, including rooftops.

WHO TO BEFRIEND

Your neighbours

Your most valuable acquaintance during the depression is not one person, but many - your community. In such difficult times, communities have united to try to help each other. Of course there are some neighbours who steal and lie, but most show kindness and compassion. There is strength in numbers during the depression and it's vital you get out there and make friends. Of particular note are store owners, such as grocers, who may be willing to extend credit for their friendly, neighbourly customers.

Extra tip:

One important thing to bear in mind when meeting people from this era is that they very much like to keep up appearances. They don't want to show how hard the times are, and there are examples of women using fabrics from all kinds of things, even caskets, to sew beautiful dresses.



FIG.03

WHO TO AVOID

Bankers

The most unreliable and risky investment during the depression is the banks. The Wall Street Crash left people fearing for their finances, so huge numbers withdrew their deposits. This caused many banks to fail, and as more banks failed the people's belief in them diminished, with 1,300 failing in 1930 alone. Although it is this panic that has contributed to the depression, it's far too risky to use the banks.

There is no telling when they may suddenly close without any warning. If you deposit your money there, you could lose it the very next day.

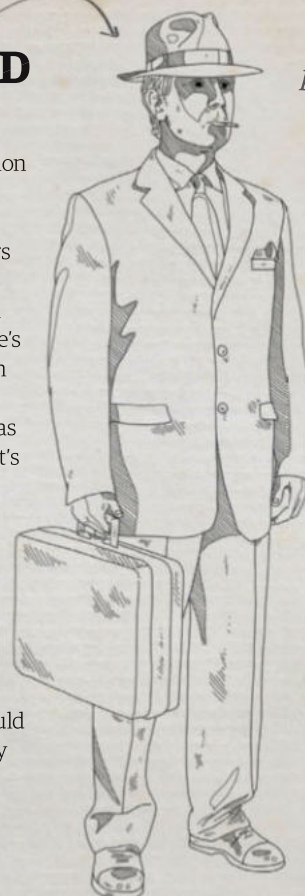


FIG.04

Did you know?

In areas affected by the Dust Bowl, some have learned how to use tumbleweed to feed their families.

Helpful Skills

In a world without savings, what you have to offer will mean the difference between a full table or an empty stomach

Hunting

Obtaining food should be your priority, so having the ability to hunt, fish and forage will aid you hugely, and are three of the main ways in which families fill their bellies.

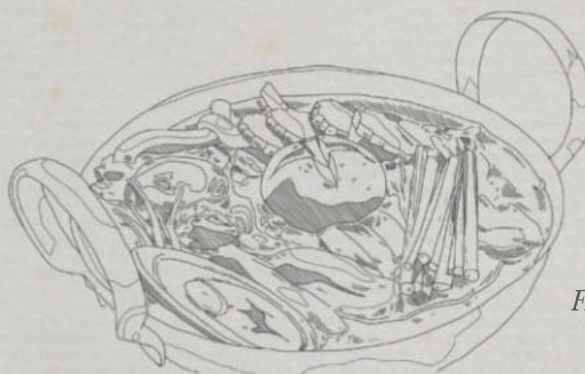
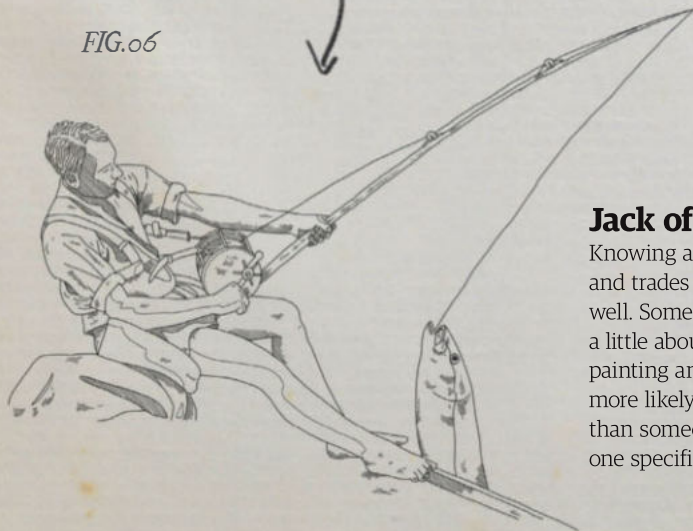


FIG.05

Cooking

Nearly all food is made from scratch and the ability to stretch limited produce is key to survival. One-dish suppers, casseroles and meals like bean sandwiches and macaroni and cheese are popular.

FIG.06



Jack of all trades

Knowing a variety of skills and trades will serve you well. Someone who knows a little about plumbing, painting and repairs is more likely to find work than someone with just one specific skill.

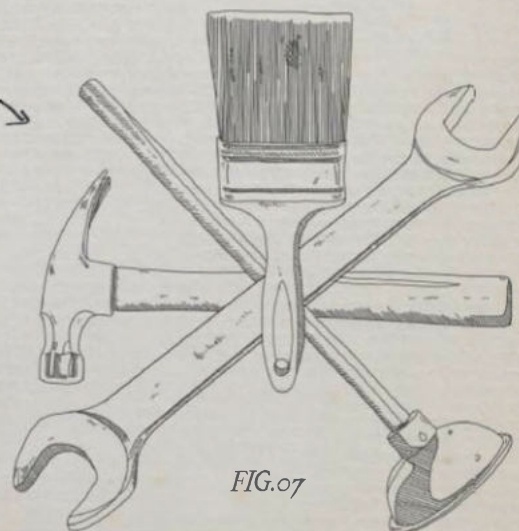


FIG.07

OF Death

From superstitions to strange rituals, lift the veil on the fascinating and macabre ways the Victorians dealt with mortality





From taking photographs of dead relatives to opening shops selling mourning clothes, the Victorians commercialised death. This was an era of industry, with hard work being seen as the creator of fortunes. By the end of the century, there would be compulsory schooling in Britain, better literacy levels, and scientific and medical progress across the Western world. Yet at the same time, the gap between rich and poor was enormous, and poverty levels, economic depression and high mortality rates meant that many were acutely aware of the inevitability of death.

This was heightened by the growth of newspapers, which covered catastrophic events such as the Great Famine in 1840s

Ireland, and the deaths of the famous, the rich, and even the poor. In addition, reporters showed little restraint when writing about the horrendous living conditions of the urban poor in grisly detail.

You could not avoid death, either in reality or the media. Both in Britain and the USA, the press detailed strange, unpleasant demises, and the post-mortems that followed them. The Victorian era also saw the creation of illustrated newspapers that depicted corpses in dramatic situations, all to titillate readers. Given the prevalence of loss in everyday life, it is perhaps only natural the Victorians tried to understand it by writing and reading about the subject, and even by shopping for the occasion.



COMMON KILLERS

— Death lurked around every corner, but these were the most likely culprits —

Disease was rife in the Victorian era, and illnesses we shake off today could kill a century ago. Alongside these common causes of death were suicides – the result of mental maladies

or financial worries – and accidental deaths, caused by industrial accidents or other workplace incidents in days before health and safety regulations. Children were killed

when their clothes caught flame from nearby candles, or when they were scalded with hot water from kettles. The Victorian world was, in short, a dangerous place to live.

Cholera

Cholera epidemics were common in the 19th century, and during the first half of the era, it was not known what caused the infection. Most believed it was due to 'miasma' – bad air – perhaps from open sewers. In the 1850s, British doctor John Snow proved that drinking contaminated water from shared water pumps was the true cause.

Scarlet fever

Prior to the use of penicillin, this was a common cause of death among children especially. A sore throat, fever and a distinctive red rash would be key signs that the illness had struck.

Typhoid

Typhoid, or typhoid fever, was, and is, a highly contagious bacterial infection that particularly affected children, because their immune system was less developed than adults. Symptoms included stomachaches, headaches and a high temperature, and the fever could result from poor sanitation or personal hygiene.

Drowning

Both a form of accidental death and a common choice of suicide method in Victorian times – it didn't help that few people knew how to swim. Millais' painting of Ophelia about to drown in 1852 made it appear rather more romantic than the reality.

Tuberculosis

Believed to be the cause of the Brontë siblings' death, tuberculosis – commonly referred to as 'consumption' in the Victorian era – was a lung disease that caused a horrific and distinctive cough, weight loss and fever. As with so many Victorian diseases, it was infectious and spread through the air.

THE WAKING DEAD

— Fears of being buried alive led to some ingenious coffin contraptions —

The inaccuracies of medical practices meant there was a real risk of a premature burial in the 19th century. To determine death, one technique included applying hot bread to the soles of the feet and checking for a reaction, so it's not surprising the London Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial was established in 1896. They campaigned for reforms to ensure people were actually dead before the final nail in the coffin, reflecting fears across the West. A number of safety coffin designs were proposed to enable the prematurely buried to escape.

Viewing window

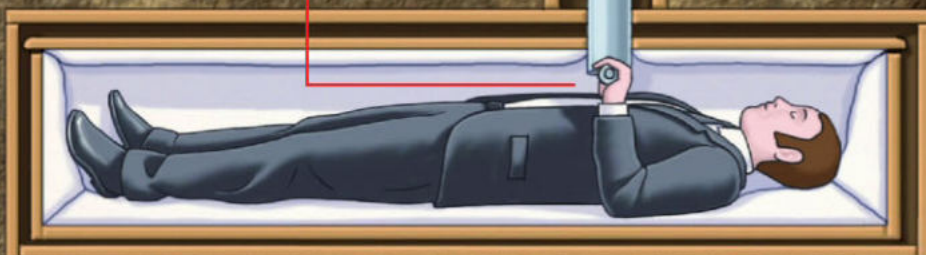
A glass box would enable people above ground to check whether or not the safety mechanism had been triggered.

Safety mechanism

The person inside the coffin could push upward to operate the device. However, this didn't account for the bloating of dead bodies, which could falsely trigger the mechanism.

Vital signs

When activated, an object would be pushed out into the viewing glass. This varied, but it would always be highly visible to attract attention.



DYING TO LOOK GOOD

The deceased had to go through a range of procedures to prepare for their big day

Victorian rituals started the second someone died. In the USA, curtains were drawn and clocks stopped at the time of the deceased's death. The house where they had lived would be decorated in black crape, with a wreath hung on the front door. Flowers and candles were placed around the house – not for ambience, but to mask the smell of a decomposing body, lying in state. Corpses were commonly kept at home for around four days, although the duration decreased during the Victorian era.

Photographs of family members might also be placed facedown to protect the people in them from being possessed by the dead person's spirit. In Germany, a woman known as a 'leichenfrau' (corpse bride) would tend to a body, washing and clothing it. Elsewhere, household servants or female family members would take on this role. It was important that the body looked presentable, as people would come to the house to view the dead – a custom that often involved giving visitors food and drink.

When mortuaries were established for bodies to lie in until being interred, cadavers would be watched by attendants, dressed suitably in black, as a means of reassuring the grieving relatives that their loved one was being treated in a dignified way. The attendants were often women, perhaps because of their perceived 'caring' temperament.

Both in Europe and across the Atlantic, bodies would be carried out of the house feet first, to prevent the dead's spirit from making his relatives follow him. The funeral, however, was a largely male event. In the first half of the century, upper-class women would not have gone to funerals, although they might have decorated the coffin prior to the event with flowers, or cut the dead's hair to put into locket, brooches or rings. Even Queen Victoria did not attend the funeral of her beloved husband, Prince Albert.



Victorian death was highly ritualised, from the laying out of bodies to the horse-drawn funeral procession

BEWARE THE BODY SNATCHERS

— The extravagance involved in many death-related rituals was at odds with the rather grave matter of stealing corpses —

The Victorians spent as much money as they were able to on saying goodbye to the dead, and to preserving their memories. The wealthiest would opt for a grand mausoleum, while those who were less well-off might instead commission a gravestone or memorial for their loved ones. Sculptures of angels were particularly popular,

signifying a guide to heaven, and sleeping children, flowers and doves, were inscribed onto headstones as well. This desire to establish something permanent was all the more poignant given the fears of grave robbing.

The body snatchers were prominent in early-19th-century Britain, but also in the US, and made money from selling fresh cadavers to medical

schools. Prior to the Victorian period, anatomy students would use criminals who had been hanged. However, as the numbers of students increased, the shortage of bodies led to rather entrepreneurial individuals digging up corpses. This caused such panic that a deceased's family and friends would watch over a body until it was buried, and iron coffins were used along with mortsafes - iron bars to protect the coffin - to prevent bodies being dug up. People even drew up wills requesting they be buried in a strong coffin.

In the UK, the 1832 Anatomy Act enabled unclaimed bodies and those donated by relatives to be used for science, effectively ending the trade in corpses. However, in the USA, this sinister business continued until the late-19th century, as more medical schools were established, and in 1878, a US congressman's body was snatched by Ohio Medical College students. But even if body snatching was becoming less common as the Victorian period progressed, the fear of it remained, along with the practice of creating a lasting memorial to a loved one.



A mortsafe was designed to stop coffins - or the bodies they contained - from being stolen

TUNNELS OF DEATH

— Dark chambers beneath Paris keep the remains of 6 million people —

Deep beneath the heart of Paris, just south of the former city gate appropriately named the Gate of Hell, are the city catacombs. Beginning in the 1780s, the remains of more than 6 million people have gradually been moved here. The distinctive stacking of skulls that visitors can see today is a result of the renovations that took place in the early-19th century, when the cemeteries were overflowing. Remains were moved to Paris's former quarries, and skulls and bones were stacked from floor to ceiling. There were even separate rooms to display skeletal deformities and monumental tablets. From 1850, the catacombs opened to the public four times a year, and as interest grew, this was eventually increased to daily visits in the 1900s and has remained a macabre attraction ever since.



Skulls and other human bones line the walls of the Paris catacombs

20 metres

The depth is equivalent to a five-storey building

800 metres

The length of the galleries in the ossuary

14°C

The constant temperature in the catacombs

THE VICTORIAN CULT OF DEATH



This couple were photographed with their deceased daughter, as a reminder of her



This girl in mourning dress has been photographed holding a picture of her dead father



MEMENTO MORI

— These artistic reminders of mortality were prized by Victorians —

Memento mori - meaning 'remember you will die' - were, in Victorian times, physical reminders of mortality, and could take various forms. Watches decorated with phrases relating to death, rings featuring locks of hair from deceased loved ones, brooches featuring skull designs or images - items such as these were used to both remember the dead and to remind the living that they would follow suit. At the most disturbing level to modern minds, the Victorians also took post-mortem photographs of the dearly departed, often posed with their surviving relatives. Due to the cost, this would sometimes be the only photograph ever taken of an individual.

A Victorian mourning brooch often contained the hair of a deceased relative



MOURNING RITUALS

— From dress to funeral etiquette, the Victorians had strict rules on how to deal with death —

Queen Victoria was a deeply unpopular queen for many years after the death of Prince Albert. It was felt she had gone overboard with mourning for her much-loved husband, wearing widow's weeds for longer than was traditional and hiding herself away. For there were rules and expectations surrounding how Victorians should deal with death and its attendant rituals. Even what they wore was subject to detailed procedures - so much

With mourning clothes required, so too were shops specialising in such outfits. This was especially so, as the superstitious Victorians saw it as unlucky to store mourning outfits at home 'between uses' and so disposed of their clothes once the period of mourning had ended, buying new outfits each time someone died. Black-edged stationery was also required, and when the deceased's family wished to signal that they were ready to socialise again, they

"The superstitious Victorians saw it as unlucky to store mourning outfits at home between uses"

so that household manuals advised readers as to what was appropriate and how long a particular outfit should be worn. Initially, women wore deepest mourning clothes that were black and made of silk, bombazine or crape. Then, gradually, the colours could lighten, becoming grey or mauve. The length of time they wore mourning clothes depended on who had died - was it a husband (which required two years' mourning), or a cousin (just one month)?

were supposed to leave cards with their friends - if they didn't, these friends would leave them alone, to respect their privacy. If cards were left for them to inquire as to their well-being, they were expected to send cards back with "thanks for kind inquiries" written on them. As with many Victorian customs, it was all about one's social appearance, and one magazine noted that "established customs" should be adhered to simply to avoid "shocking" society and appearing "heartless".

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SPEAKING TO THE DEAD

— How creative con artists became the talk of Victorian society —

Spiritualism – the belief that ghosts exist and we can communicate with them – came into being as a movement in 1848 via three American sisters: Leah, Margaret and Kate Fox. The trio hit the headlines with a sensational (and totally bogus) ghost story in which they said they had communicated with the spirit haunting their home using a series of knocks – one for ‘yes’, two for ‘no’. Rumours soon spread that the spirit belonged to a murdered

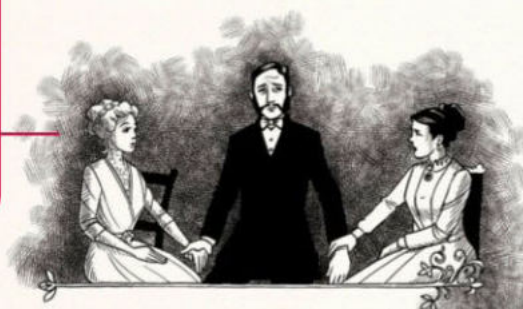
peddler whose body was hidden in the cellar. The women were quickly promoted as mediums, making a fortune by holding crowded séances where they would contact the deceased at the audience’s command.

With this business model behind them, mediums began to spring up all over the USA and then in Britain, holding intimate gatherings in darkened homes or more outlandish spectacles in music halls and theatres – for a fee.

Some might have been well-intentioned, genuinely convinced they could contact the dead, but most were frauds, using dim gaslight, sleight of hand and ingenious contraptions to hoodwink the vulnerable. Sadly, many were only too willing to believe. With technology advancing at an unbelievable pace, anything seemed possible. If they could send messages between continents via cables, then why couldn’t they communicate with the afterlife?

Take my hand

The lights are turned down or put out completely and the medium invites the participants to hold hands, or hold the wrist of the person to their left or right, to prove there’s no foul play.



The spirits arrive

Pretending to enter a trance to communicate with the spirits, the medium twitches and jerks one hand loose. Scrambling for it in the dark, the participants either side don’t realise they’ve been tricked into taking the same hand.



The spirits reach out

Using either their own hand, a waxwork replacement, a stuffed glove or a telescopic rod to reach across the table, the medium can now pretend a spirit is touching the audience.



Ghostly wheezing

One account from 1925 detailed a ghostly farmer being summoned from the grave. The sound of him pumping water was produced by a collapsible trumpet being surreptitiously opened and closed.



Sound effects

Should the ghostly tradesman have required it, the sound of sawing wood could be made by dragging the trumpet across the floor or moving the collapsible sections up and down within each other.



Spectral lights

Mysterious glowing orbs, objects or even faces could be produced by adding a dab of luminous paint to a stick, which would then appear to hover above the table.



Voices from the void

In other séances the trumpet would be the centre of attention rather than a sneaky secret, channelling spooky whispers from the beyond – either the medium was a ventriloquist or he had a hidden accomplice.



Deadly Drowning

Most distressingly, one account recalls a medium sneaking a bowl of water onto the table and blowing through a straw to simulate drowning. He cried out, ‘Help me! Help me!’ for good measure.





Robert Louis Stevenson played on Victorians' fear of monsters in his depiction of the repulsive Mr Hyde

TELLING GHOST STORIES

— In an era of austere poverty and high mortality, —
the Victorians developed an appetite for horror

Gothic fiction was a type of horror story that originated in the late-18th century, but peaked during the Victorian era. From Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) to Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case Of Dr Jekyll And Mr Hyde* (1886), Victorian audiences were fed a literary diet of monsters and ghouls, both entertaining and frightening in equal measure.

This genre of fiction was not restricted to Britain; in Germany, the Schauerroman ('shudder novel') featured similar motifs, while in Russia, Vladimir Odoevsky penned *The Living Corpse* in 1838, with Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy publishing *The Vampire* two years later. The most famous purveyor of Gothic fiction in the USA was Edgar Allan Poe, and his tales of madness were seen as following the German style of Gothic horror. *The Fall Of The House Of Usher* and his poem *The Raven* still send chills down spines today.

Victorian Gothic horror frequently involved death, or the fear of death, reflecting society's preoccupation with the subject - a result of high mortality rates and the constant threat of disease. Panics about crime and rural to urban migration also sparked concerns about the stranger in one's midst. People were less likely to know their neighbours in Victorian times than they would have done in earlier, more stable, rural communities, and the increasing number of strangers led to them being demonised in fiction.

The after-effects of the industrial revolution were felt in depictions of cities as sprawling, dark places, and the growing gap between rich and poor was also portrayed as something evil, as shown in works by authors such as Bram Stoker and Charles Dickens. But most of all, the obsession with Gothic literature reflected the Victorians' similar obsession with mortality, death, and mourning.

THE MEANING OF MONSTERS

19th-century authors created characters — that played on contemporary fears — about strangers, crime and disease. Here are the most famous



Dracula

Count Dracula, a vampire, was a creature caught between life and death. He is thought to reflect fears of immigration and sexual promiscuity. Being bitten is akin to being diseased, with 'cures' being sought to make the bitten well again.

Mr Hyde

The mysterious, hunchbacked Hyde is the alter-ego of Dr Jekyll, who has created a potion that enables him to become this repulsive being. Hyde represented both sex - something Victorians were keen to 'hide' - and the supernatural.



Frankenstein's monster

Victor Frankenstein's creation of a monster made of body parts from dead criminals reflected concerns about body snatchers, and how medicine and science - in particular, the development of electricity - could be used for evil as well as good.

Heathcliff

The anti-hero of *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff is not a monster per se, but is certainly monstrous. He comes from an unknown background, is cruel and feared by others. His darkness and outcast status make him akin to Hyde and Frankenstein's monster.



MURDER AND MAYHEM AT THE GRAND GUIGNOL

Before slasher movies, there was a French theatre of terror that turned stomachs

Opening in 1897, Paris's Théâtre du Grand-Guignol shocked and thrilled audiences with murder and torture so realistic it made people vomit and faint. It was originally designed to explore subjects not normally seen as fit for theatre - criminals, prostitutes and sinister asylums - to criticise the social inequalities of the era; its name was taken from a violent French puppet, in the style of English Punch and Judy, but the plays were strictly for adults.

The building had originally been a chapel, and the 'confessional'-style boxes, Gothic style and angels flanking the stage, bearing witness to the brutal acts, only added to the eerie ambience. Some plays looked at the individual consciousness and the passage from one existence to another, and this was key to the theatre's success. Death was ever present in real life, but the horrors of the Grand Guignol could actually offer comfort by helping audiences understand it - and the possibility of some form of life beyond the veil.

THE MUMMY RETURNS

As Egyptomania swept through
— Victorian England, centuries-old corpses —
inspired a wave of creepy customs

Ancient Egyptians believed in giving their dead an appropriate send-off, constructing elaborate mausolea to them, and entombing their corpses with personal possessions that might assist them in the afterlife. For the Victorians, with their morbid and complex rituals, the example of these ancient people was one to follow. Throughout the 19th century, Egyptian influences could be found in women's mourning jewellery, which often featured obelisks or scarabs, and on tombs, mausolea, cemetery gates and even entire graveyards, which had an Egyptian style of architecture or decorative features.

been removed, and, for his big finale, would raise the mummy to its feet, as though it was still alive. Such events continued throughout the century.

This link between fear, entertainment and science, with its specific Egyptian focus, was highlighted by the presence of the Egyptian Hall in London's Piccadilly. Built in Egyptian style in 1812, it was originally a museum designed to house curiosities from the South Seas, but by the late 1800s it was associated with séances, theatre and magic shows — consistent with the general trend toward spookiness, from the curious and enlightened 1820s to the morbidly fascinated 1880s. The

"These cod-scientific displays were, in reality, more about playing on people's desire to be scared and entertained"

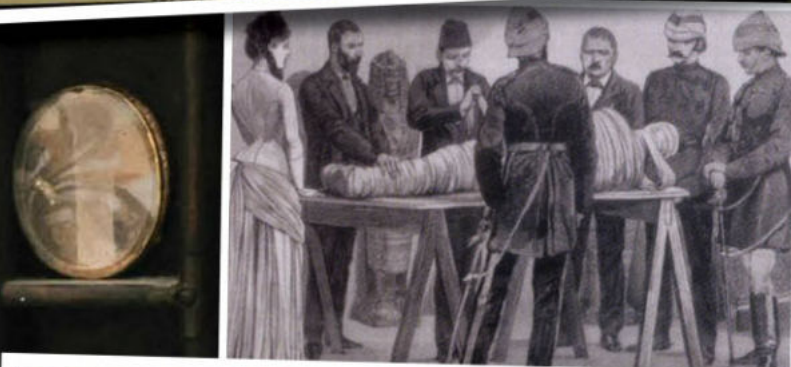
Ancient Egyptian texts were translated by German Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius in the 1840s, and detailed their beliefs about death and the afterlife, showing dead bodies reanimating. Naturally, the Victorians were very curious about Egyptian mummies. Antiquities had been brought from Egypt to Europe — especially England, but also Italy and Germany — in the late-18th and early-19th centuries, but now, these concealed corpses became objects of intense interest.

At the start of the era, surgeon Thomas Pettigrew began organising public events where people could go to watch mummies being unwrapped. However, these cod-scientific displays were, in reality, more about playing on people's desire to be scared and entertained in equal measure. Pettigrew would saw off parts of the mummy's skull, showing how the brains had

in-house duo of Maskelyne and Cooke did openly fake séances and hauntings, and it became famous for 'anti spiritualism'. John Nevil Maskelyne probably wondered why he bothered. So skilful were the pair's recreations that, "...the Spiritualists had no alternative but to claim us as the most powerful spirit mediums who found it more profitable to deny the assistance of spirits."

In a world that was advancing at an unprecedented pace — where steam trains carved a path through the countryside and suspension bridges loomed large on the landscape — the Victorian era was also a golden age of belief. Religion, spiritualism and magic pervaded every aspect of daily life, from literature and architecture, to fashion and social etiquette — it was a unique period in history where science and the supernatural were often one and the same.

EGYPTIAN HALL.



John Maskelyne formed the Occult Committee in 1914 to debunk psychics and supernatural acts



Nostradamus

One of the most infamous oracles of all time, was Nostradamus a divine prophet or a fraud?

Written by Willow Winsham

Hailed recently as the author of the 'Gospel of Doom for the modern age', Michel de Nostredame - or Nostradamus as he is more commonly known - has had a chequered reputation over the centuries. Born in the French town of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence as 1503 came to a close, Nostradamus was one of at least nine children born to a notary father and a mother from who he could claim a family history in medicine. Little could they have suspected, however, that his name would become synonymous with mayhem and catastrophe both during his lifetime and beyond.

Although the details of his life are often disputed, it is generally assumed that Nostradamus began his professional life at the University of Avignon, although this was brought to an abrupt end in 1521 due to the spread of plague to the city. This opened up new horizons for the young man, and, if reports are to be believed, Nostradamus did not waste the time that followed, spending eight years researching herbal remedies as he roamed the countryside. This stood him in good stead for working as an apothecary, a vocation that he took to keenly for several years, providing cures and tinctures for those who came to him in his self-imposed exile.

In 1529, he decided to try again at the university route, and enrolled to study for a doctorate in medicine at the University of Montpellier. This was also to be short-lived, as he was asked to leave when

not only his previous trade as an apothecary was discovered (something that was strictly against the rules of the university) but also rumours abounded that he had been speaking out against the medical profession. This lack of formal training did not, however, greatly harm his prospects. In 1531, Nostradamus moved to Agen, married and had two children. Following the death of his wife, he continued on with his previous travels. It was during this time that his reputation as a healer of plague was established (although there is little evidence that his attempted cures in either Marseille or his native Salon-de-Provence were successful) before in 1547, he settled once again in his hometown. Here, Nostradamus married for the second and final time, his new wife a widow of wealth who bore him six children during their time together.

Nostradamus's first official dabbling with the occult and connected subjects came in the mid-1500s, when he produced the first of a long run of annual almanacs of predictions and weather forecasts, capitalising on the popularity of this new craze. Nostradamus's work catapulted him into the limelight, and he soon found himself catering for the wealthy and prestigious, building up a client base that prized his ability to produce personalised predictions and charts. Despite his reputation as a seer, however, Nostradamus expected his clients to do a lot of the legwork. Whereas a professional astrologer would calculate the birth charts himself,

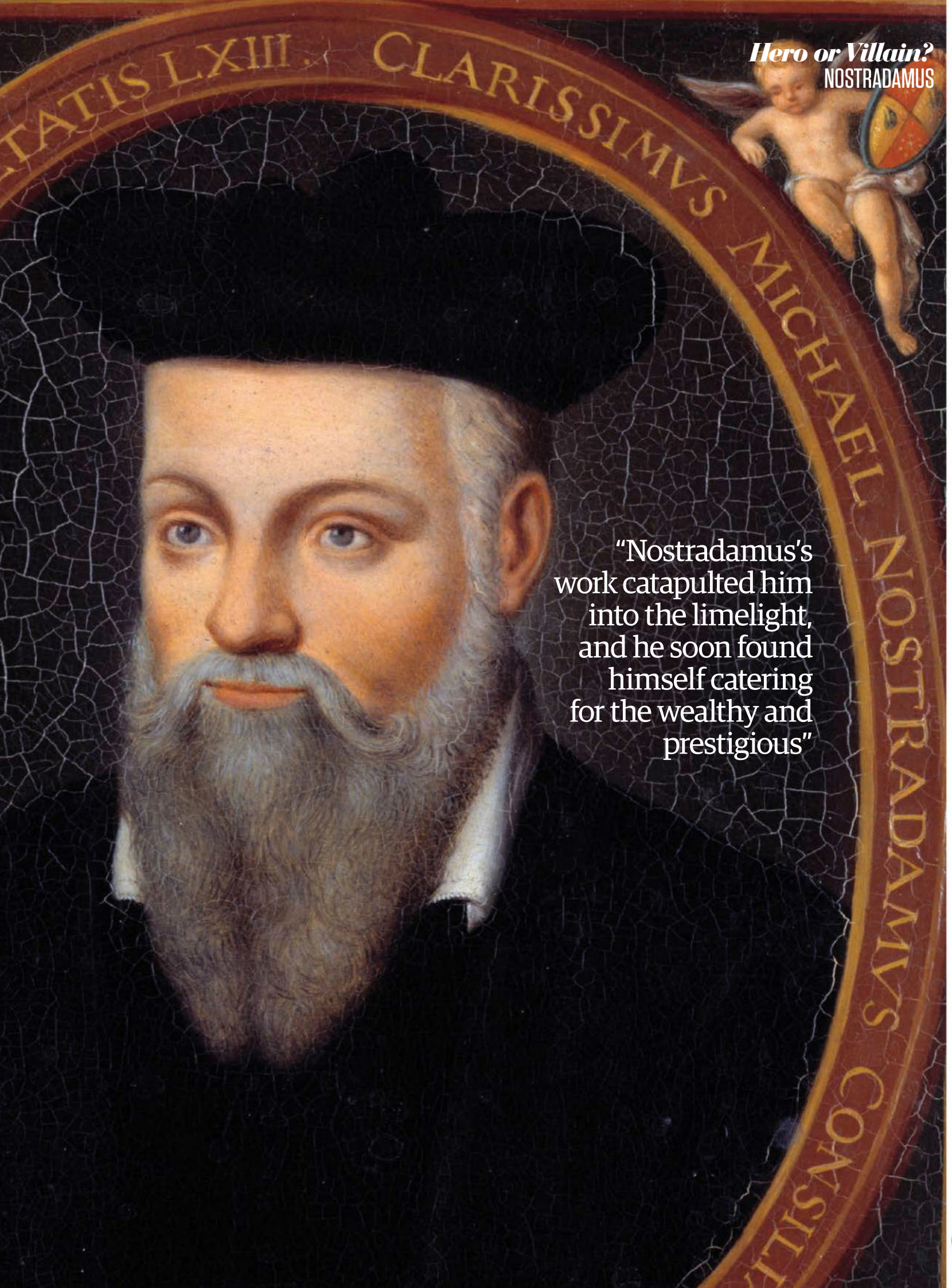


Defining moment

Launched into print

It was through the publication of his annual almanacs that Nostradamus made a name for himself and rose to prominence in the world of prediction and prophecy for which he became so famous, both in his own time and in the centuries since. In total, the yearly almanacs contained nearly 6,500 prophecies, proving immensely popular at the time of publication and paving the way to his later work on *The Prophecies*.

1550



“Nostradamus’s work catapulted him into the limelight, and he soon found himself catering for the wealthy and prestigious”

Hero or Villain?

NOSTRADAMUS



Nostradamus is often credited with being one of the greatest prophets of all time, even though he refuted the title



Defining moment

A royal meeting

Nostradamus's initial meeting with Catherine de Medici was to prove profitable at the time and was later to bear further fruit when, a few years on, the queen mother made a point of visiting him in Salon-de-Provence on a royal progress. The roles of king's physician and councillor that were then bestowed on him provided a handsome salary and increased his prestige.

1556

Nostradamus was said to have predicted the rise of Catherine de Medici's sons to the throne of France

Nostradamus cunningly requested this information be provided for him. This was potentially due to a lack of skill and confidence in that area, as the charts that he did produce did not stand up under scrutiny and led to criticism from other astrologers.

As Nostradamus rose to prominence in the world of the mystical and arcane, Catherine de Medici, queen of Henry II of France, also sought out his services. It could be said this was skilfully

The Prophecies were translated into several languages and went through many editions

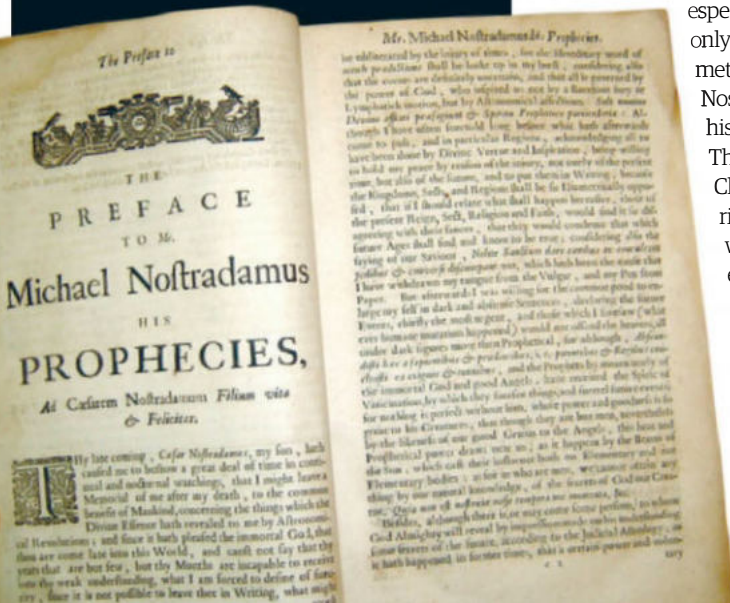
orchestrated by Nostradamus himself, as a prediction in his almanac for 1555 contained a prediction that hinted at impending danger for the royal family. Understandably worried by this and believing wholeheartedly in the power of such predictions, the queen summoned Nostradamus to Paris in 1556, and during the meeting, commissioned horoscopes for her children, including the future kings of France Charles IX and Henry of Anjou. Nostradamus is said to have predicted the rise of Anjou, something that must have caused great satisfaction for Catherine,

especially as her son was at the time only sixth in line to the throne. They met again some years later when Nostradamus was an old man, in his native Salon-de-Provence itself. The royal party of Catherine and Charles IX braved the plague-ridden town to meet the man who Catherine held in such esteem. During the meeting,

Nostradamus was created both a king's physician and a royal councillor, along with being rewarded for his services with 200 écus.

Nostradamus was not popular with everyone, however. There were those who denounced him and called him a liar and a fake; some even went as far as to declare him insane or outright evil. This less than flattering reputation has survived long after his death due to the resurgence of interest in the most popular and famous of Nostradamus's works - the predictions contained in the series of quatrains known as *The Prophecies*. Published in three editions, the last after his death, the quatrains speak in general terms of various types of catastrophes, focusing particularly on natural disasters such as earthquakes, plagues and floods, along with wars, murders and invasions. Some have even credited Nostradamus with predicting numerous pivotal events throughout history, from the Great Fire of London and the French Revolution to the two world wars, the 9/11 tragedy and even the death of Princess Diana.

"Nostradamus did not fit the image of a man elected by god to bring his word to the world"





Nostradamus appeared in the 19th-century *Dictionnaire Infernal*, a guide to demonology



Catherine de Medici was both a patron and fervent believer in the prophecies of Nostradamus

The general vagueness of *The Prophecies* - in most cases the quatrains lack dates entirely, and where they are mentioned they are used in the most general terms - allows a reader to interpret his words according to their own beliefs and agenda. Indeed, one of the greatest criticisms of the writings of Nostradamus - both from his contemporaries and modern readers - is the general feeling of confusion due to the wordiness and lack of clarity, with more than one client complaining that they could not understand a word that had been written for them. This has been further hindered by the fact that no two editions or even copies in some cases of the quatrains are the same - both printing methods and the translation process have compounded the often-impenetrable nature of his works.

Although heralded as a prophet, Nostradamus did not fit the image of a man elected by god to bring his word to the world, and in fact it was not

a term Nostradamus used in relation to himself: he actually refuted the claim on at least one occasion in print. The label of prophet ascribed to him by his supporters - much like that of 'doctor,' which was used of him on several occasions despite the fact he had never achieved a degree in medicine - did more to enhance his status than hinder it, and it would have been a much less worldly man than Nostradamus who would have spurned the benefits to be had from such an association. It has been said that Nostradamus worried for his reputation and even his life on occasion. Some sources maintain that he feared the might of the Inquisition itself, although this has since been disputed, as it was

religious differences rather than any occult belief or practice that led to his brief conflict with the Church in Agen in 1538. There have also been several practices attributed to Nostradamus through the ages to enhance his occult status, with assertions

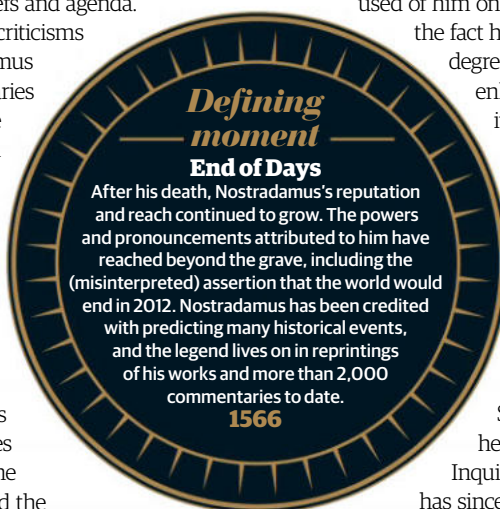
made that he was adept in fire and water gazing. These claims, however, cannot be substantiated, and instead form part of the ever-evolving myth. There is also little evidence to support accusations of secret adherence to Protestantism and hostility towards the Catholic Church; his writings contain no censure of the church and he was favoured by Catholic leaders such as Catherine de Medici, his clients being drawn from a mix of Protestant and Catholic backgrounds.

By the mid-1560s, the elderly Nostradamus was not in good health, suffering increasingly from gout and dropsy. Perhaps sensing the end was near, he set his affairs in order, providing for his wife to live comfortably in the event she should remarry and also leaving provision for his children after his death. This was not done a moment too soon; on the night of 1 July 1566, according to legend, Nostradamus went to bed with the chilling prediction to his secretary that he would not be alive come morning. True to his word, he was discovered dead the next day, exactly as he had predicted.

Was Nostradamus a hero or a villain?
Let us know what you think

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Bluffer's Guide ITALIAN PENINSULA, 535-554

The Gothic War



Timeline

476



Odoacer, a former Roman army officer, deposes Emperor Romulus Augustulus and proclaims himself ruler of Italia (Italy). This marks the end of Western Roman Empire.

488

Emperor Zeno of the Byzantine (Eastern) Roman Empire sends the Goth leader Theoderic to retake Italia, which begins a four-year war.

493



Theoderic and Odoacer eventually agree a truce but Theoderic kills Odoacer at the celebration banquet and rules Italy for 34 years.

527

Justinian I becomes emperor of the Byzantine Empire and begins a campaign to restore the lost Western half of the ancient Roman Empire.

536-540

Justinian's generals, Belisarius and Narses, capture several important cities but Belisarius falls out with Justinian, and he is recalled to Constantinople.

Did you know?

Byzantine historian Procopius claimed that Justinian killed a trillion people during his reign. The true figure is probably 5 million.



What was it?

When Justinian I became the Byzantine Emperor in 527, the Italian peninsula had been ruled by the Goths since the fall of Rome in the previous century. Justinian sought to conquer the former lands of the Roman Empire and so attacked simultaneously from the north and south. The Goths couldn't defend against both at once and the southern army, commanded by General Belisarius, swept up from Sicily to seize Rome.

The Goths went through four different leaders in this time due to infighting and assassination, before they finally elected Totila in 541. At this point, the tide of the war changed and Totila re-captured Florence, followed by Naples. Totila chose to by-pass heavily defended Rome and instead attacked in the south, where Roman garrisons were spread thinly. He destroyed the fortifications of each town but showed mercy to the inhabitants, hoping to recruit them to his cause. This time it was the Byzantines that were divided, since Justinian was simultaneously fighting against the Persians. But in 545, this ended in a truce and Justinian's armies were free to finally rout the Goths.



What were the consequences?

Although Justinian eventually defeated the Goths, the protracted war was catastrophic for his empire. 20 years of fighting had made farming almost impossible and famine engulfed the countryside. Tens of thousands died of starvation and the city of Rome lay in ruins, its aqueducts destroyed by the Goths and its population reduced from 1 million to just 35,000. Most of the Roman Senate was put to the sword in a frenzy of revenge after Totila was killed in battle. Within a few years, three quarters of the city was deserted, with open expanses of grassland growing within the city walls.

Italy was so depleted by the war that the Byzantine Empire couldn't hold it for long. Justinian died in 565, and within three years, the Lombards, another Germanic tribe, invaded from the north. The Byzantines managed to defend a few coastal towns that could be resupplied by sea, but classic Roman Italy was gone forever.



Who was involved?



Justinian I

c.482 - 14 November 565

The emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire sought to recover the territories of Ancient Rome. His victory cost him the empire.



Flavius Belisarius

c.505 - c.March 565

Commander in chief for Justinian's invasion of Italy, Belisarius was frequently denied reinforcements by the emperor.



Baduila, aka Totila

Unknown-552

Totila was the most successful of the Ostrogoth leaders during the war. He was eventually killed at the Battle of Taginae.

541

541-542

552



Totila is made king of the Ostrogoths. With Belisarius away and the Byzantine Empire also under threat from the Persians, he retakes much of Italy.



Bubonic plague breaks out in Constantinople and the Eastern Mediterranean, killing at least 10 million people in total.

Totila is killed at the Battle of Taginae. The following year, Narses defeats the last of the Ostrogoth army at the Battle of Mons Lactarius.

THE ORDER OF ASSASSINS

From their mountain holdfasts, this deadly Medieval sect unleashed holy terror, striking fear into kings and sultans alike

Written by Peter Price

The act of assassination is as old as humanity itself. It is so culturally ingrained that it is symbolically mentioned in the book of Genesis, telling that even some of the first humans committed the act. The secretive Islamic sect called Hashashin, or Assassins, did not invent the act but merely lent its name.

The Assassins, who were also known as Ismaili, were a breakaway sect of Shia Islam known as Nizari Ismaili. They operated in the Middle East from about 1090, just before the advent of the First Crusade, to 1256, and held a string of strongholds that extended through modern-day Syria and the Levant. Correspondence sent to the Middle East by the Holy Roman emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, places their location in the mountains near Aleppo, Damascus and Antioch, which would see them surrounded by enemies on all sides. After Western Christendom forged the Crusader States in the Holy Land, these kingdoms, along with the Islamic Seljuk Empire reigning supreme in the East, hemmed in the Assassins.

The order was founded by a man named Hassan-i Sabbah, a follower of the Ismaili beliefs and a popular preacher in Persia. Hassan used his fame to gain sufficient followers to found the Order of the Assassins. He was known as a thinker and writer, as well a warrior and would claim the name 'Old Man of the Mountain', a title that would pass to each

subsequent leader, giving him a timeless quality. He led the Ismaili to break from the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, who he saw as usurpers, and settle in Syria where they could be free to practice their beliefs. As Ismaili was a Shia sect of Islam, it was immediately at odds with the Sunni rulers of the Levant, and these Muslim leaders would become some of the Assassins' most numerous foes. There were also clashes with the Crusader kingdoms, but these were not always sought after and mostly occurred when the Christians encroached upon the Ismaili's lands.

The Ismaili held power through a string of heavily defended fortresses, the largest and headquarters being Alamut Castle. Choosing to occupy these strongholds, located in the Syrian mountains, was no accident, as it gave the Assassins the protection and isolation they needed to safeguard themselves from their enemies. For more than 100 years they held off repeated attacks from the Seljuks, various Crusader states and the Fatimids before finally succumbing to the combined forces of the Mongols and the Egyptian sultan.

Many followers of the Old Man in the Mountain came from the mountainous and rural communities that existed around their fortresses, which also served as a source of young recruits. In the cities of the Holy Land they could find allies in artisans, tradesmen and the working-class population, although higher patronage seemed out of their reach.



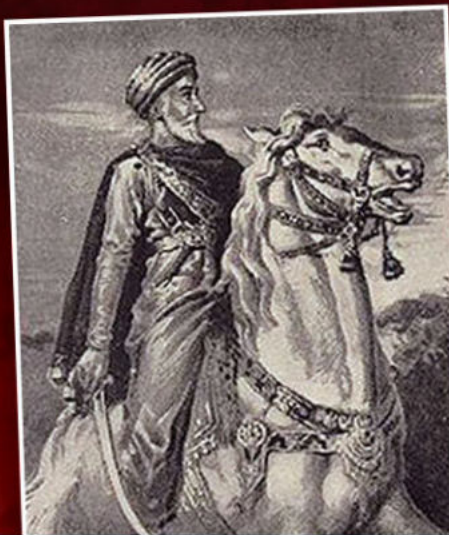
© Darren Tan



An aura of fantasy surrounds the Assassins, and they were renowned for their fanaticism and loyalty, supposedly gained through drugging and subterfuge. Travellers like Marco Polo recorded the sect's bizarre initiation rituals during their journeys throughout the Middle East, although it is worth noting that Polo was born in 1254, and his work refers to Sabbah as the Old Man of the Mountain, but he had been dead for more than a century when Polo was born.

The Venetian writes of a paradise built by Sabbah that contained such wonders that prospective young men who were chosen as apprentice Assassins, and drugged upon their arrival, would not want to leave. Whether or not this fanciful tale has any truth to it, it shows how the rest of the world viewed the Assassins: as a secretive and cult-like sect. These men were being conditioned to follow Sabbah's orders and their loyalty was known throughout the Middle East and beyond. "You have me more fully in your power than the old man has his Assassins," was a line from a Provençal troubadour's repertoire, highlighting how far the knowledge of Assassins' loyalties had spread and was a source of wonder to leaders throughout the world.

What the Assassins were most remembered for, however, are their killing sprees that struck fear into the hearts of Muslims and Christians alike. They were looked upon with disdain and disgust



Hassan-i Sabbah was the first to bear the name the Old Man of the Mountain, but would not be the last

by the majority of the Christian kingdoms because of their unorthodox and unconventional way of killing. The disdain in which they were viewed is evident with one writing stating, "This breed of men live without law," and found the Ismaili ate pork, an oddity among Muslims.

The Crusaders inhabited a world where martial prowess and chivalric honour were key components in both diplomacy and battle. In the Latin kingdoms and Western Europe, the Franks would have looked down on the Assassins as they would kill with stealth, treachery and deceit rather than killing a man 'honourably'. A German priest named Brocardus describes them with venomous

hatred, saying they, "...are thirsty for human blood, kill the innocent for a price, and care nothing for either life or salvation."

The reason for the Assassins' inception and calculated murders is still up for debate. However, tyrannicide and a religious obligation to remove unworthy rulers were two motives that undoubtedly drove them. The killing of rulers for the perceived good of the land has occurred throughout history, such as Julius Caesar being murdered in an effort to save the Roman Republic. The Ismaili victims were chiefly princes, officials, ministers and religious figures who were mostly Sunni Muslims and Crusaders. Following a code not to take innocent lives, native Jews, Christians and Shias were spared the knife.

To further add to their reputation, the Assassins apparently only used daggers for their 'holy' work. Missiles and poison - popular killing devices in the Middle Ages - may never have been utilised,

"The Assassins had no qualms about targeting their victims in full view of witnesses, which set them apart from other hired killers"

ASSASSINS' HIT LIST

EDWARD I

By the time of Edward I's Crusade, the Assassins as an organisation had disappeared but there were still individuals that possessed their skill. As the assailant crept into Edward's bedchamber, the English king, alerted to his presence, grappled and killed his opponent with his bare hands.

The long arm of the Assassins could reach anywhere. Kings and sultans went to great lengths to protect themselves if they raised the ire of the Old Man of the Mountain.

CONRAD OF MONTFERRAT

The highest ranking of the Assassins' many victims, Conrad was stabbed to death during a meeting of clergy in Tyre. The Assassins had disguised themselves as Christian monks in order to get close enough to the king of Jerusalem.

NIZAM AL-MULK

A powerful Seljuk sultan, al-Mulk was stabbed while being carried on his litter by a beggar, later discovered to be an Assassin in disguise. The story goes that al-Mulk and Hassan-i Sabbah were old friends that had quarrelled, seeing the latter have his old companion killed.

SALADIN

As a Sunni Muslim, Saladin, the archenemy of Richard the Lionheart, was also at odds with the Shia Assassins. Dressed as soldiers, the Assassins made two attempts at murder: once in 1175 during the siege of Aleppo, and the following year during the siege of Azaz. Saladin's well-crafted armour saw him escape both.



Without hesitation, Assassins take their own lives to demonstrate their leader's power



This calligram, the Ismail Lion, symbolises the lion of God for the Nizari Ismailis branch of Shia Islam



Disguised as a beggar, a white-turbaned Assassin strikes at Nizam al-Mulk when he is least expecting it

even when they would have been perhaps more effective. Their method of killing enabled them to wield terror as a political weapon against their enemies and kept the small state in power for centuries without a substantial army to back it up.

The Assassins had no qualms about targeting their victims in full view of witnesses, which set them apart from other hired killers of the time. Both Muslim and Christian leaders had to be constantly mindful of their safety and Saladin, a Kurdish leader who attempted to unify the Muslim world, took to sleeping in a wooden tower for added security after multiple attempts on his life.

The reigning king of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, Conrad of Montferrat, was the first Christian leader targeted by the Assassins in 1192. The brutal stabbing in his home city of Tyre was a direct projection of the Assassins' power. Being killed in broad daylight while surrounded by a bodyguard of knights was unheard of in the kingdom of heaven. One of the Assassins confessed under torture that Richard the Lionheart had organised Conrad's death, as the two men regularly clashed. A letter written by the Old Man in the Mountain to the European princes absolved Richard of all blame in the murder. He stressed the fact that innocent bystanders were never targeted or permitted to come to harm.

By eliminating key figures in either a Muslim or Christian Kingdom, the Assassins could control the politics of the region without flexing military muscle. This verse from an Ismaili poet shows

TICKET TO PARADISE

Many years of tall tales have led the Assassins' origins to become the stuff of legends

The initiation rituals of the Assassins are filled with mythology and folklore. The most famous account of their way of life comes from the Venetian Marco Polo, who wrote of a, "...garden, the largest and most beautiful that ever was seen... There were runnels... flowing freely with wine and milk and honey... [and] the most beautiful damsels in the world, who could play on all manner of instruments... and danced in a manner that it was charming to behold. For the Old Man desired to make his people believe that this was actually Paradise."

Led into this 'paradise' would be young men drugged with hashish

who would become loyal to Old Man, as they believed he would grant them eternal life if they followed his earthly wishes. They would be known as Fedayeen, an Arabic term that describes someone willing to sacrifice themselves for a greater cause. This tale and substance may have influenced the name 'hashashin' and eventually 'assassin', which we still use today to denote hired killers.

Polo almost certainly invented the tale to impress the courts back in Europe and scholars have agreed that the effects of hashish would have been well known at this time, meaning that the young men who took the drug

would probably have known what had been given to them.

Tales of the Assassins' fanatic loyalty also abounded, with a one anecdote describing a meeting between Count Henry of Champagne and the Old Man of the Mountain. Henry's army was ten times larger than the Old Man's, and the count boasted that he obviously controlled the most powerful force. The Old Man countered, and ordered his men throw themselves from the castle walls. Without hesitation, the Assassins leapt from the ramparts, shocking the count and forcing him to agree that the zealous Assassins were superior.

The Order of Assassins

“Caught between a hammer and an anvil, the Assassin castles fell one by one until their Syrian powerbase was totally destroyed”

the confidence the organisation had in its surgical strikes: “Brothers, when the time of triumph comes, with good fortune from both worlds as our companion, then by a single warrior on foot a king may be stricken with terror, though he own more than a hundred thousand horsemen.”

In order to reach their targets, the Assassins needed to be masters of disguise and would often adopt the style of local populations in order to blend in. Images of hooded and masked men skulking through the shadows are certainly romantic but unfortunately rather conspicuous, especially in the daylight. Props were also key to their deceit, as seen in the first recorded assassination in 1106. Using a captured Frankish knight's horse and armour, six Assassins were sent to eliminate a rival religious figure from Cairo and managed to bluff their way into the target's presence without raising suspicion.

Psychological as well as physical violence were among the Assassins' tools. Ahmad Sanjar, a Seljuk sultan, had been waging war on the Ismaili castles and had repeatedly refused peace negotiations with any ambassadors sent to him. Supposedly Sanjar awoke one morning to a note asking for peace stuck beside his bed with a knife. A messenger soon arrived from the Assassins saying, “Did I not wish the sultan well that the dagger which was struck in the hard ground would have been planted on your soft breast.” Terrified, Sanjar ensured that decades of peace were maintained between the Seljuks and the Ismaili, with lucrative tax collections greatly benefiting the latter.

The fear that the Ismaili inspired in the holy land has led to a slightly distorted view of this secret order. The Mongols destroyed any written records the Assassins may have kept of themselves when they sacked Alamut Castle, and so most of our information comes from their enemies. The Assassins were another political kingdom in the holy land and not just a radical, dangerous organisation, as the Frankish or Muslim chroniclers would have us believe.

Although their main military tactic was one of defence and surgical strikes, the Ismaili were known to forge military and political alliances when necessary or when it suited them. Even though the Turks were usually seen as the enemy, there are instances of alliances between the two factions. In 1126, the Assassins and Turkish joined in a combined attack against the Crusaders, although this ended in failure.



Edward I managed to turn the tables and kill his assassin but received a serious wound in the struggle



This 15th-century line engraving shows the Old Man of the Mountain giving orders to two of his followers at Alamut Castle

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

During the Middle Ages, the Middle East was divided into many different, warlike factions

SELJUK EMPIRE



Founded in 1037, this Sunni Muslim Empire stretched from the Hindu Kush mountains in the east to Anatolia at the height of its power. It would repeatedly clash with the Assassins until it was conquered and became the Khwarezmid Empire.

KINGDOM OF TRIPOLI



The southern Crusader state bordering the Ismaili state fought the enemies of the Assassins such as the Turks and Egyptians. It was absorbed into Mamluk Egypt shortly after Alamut fell to the Mongols.

KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM



One of the most important Crusader states, the kingdom held both the holy city and the coastal city of Acre. Swathes of the kingdom would change hands between Christian and Muslim powers multiple times.

MONGOL EMPIRE



Originally led by Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire was once the largest contiguous land empire ever. Utilising cavalry archers, the Mongol armies ravaged Asia, the Middle East and Europe and broke open the northern Assassin castles.

KINGDOM OF ANTIOCH



Unlike the other Crusader states, Antioch was mostly populated by Armenian and Greek Orthodox Christians, with the few Muslims living outside the city walls. Like Tripoli, Antioch would be overrun by Mamluk Egypt.

FATIMID CALIPHATE



Although it was an Ismaili Shia state, the Assassins saw the rulers as usurpers. Predating the Assassins, the caliphate reigned from 909 until 1171, when Saladin incorporated the land into his Ayyubid dynasty.

The Mongols westward expansion was blocked by Alamut Castle, sealing the fortress's fate

By the year 1227, the Assassins were a political powerhouse, so much so that Emperor Frederick II made a detour on his Crusade to pay tribute to the Old Man of the Mountain. At the same time, the Knights Hospitaller demanded that the Ismaili pay the order tribute. The response was simple: "Your king the Emperor gives to us; will you then take from us?" This open defiance was not taken kindly by the knights and they attacked the Assassins' stronghold and were able to make off with a substantial amount of booty.

The decline of the Assassins came from fighting enemies on two fronts. The first and most deadly were the Mongols. These horsemen from the Asian steppes struck the Middle East like a thunderbolt in 1256, crushing anyone who resisted them. The Assassins, along with the other Islamic factions, put aside their differences to face this new threat, but to no avail. The Assassins may have even aggravated the Mongols by attempting to have one of their leaders, Mongke Khan, killed. After this failed attempt, the Mongolian General Hulagu Khan besieged and captured Alamut in the same year.

The second foe manifested himself as Baybar, a sultan of Egypt who had his sights set on liberating the Levant from both Frankish and Mongol occupation. The Ismaili, being an independent and deadly faction caught in the middle of the two greater powers, was a danger in his eyes. Caught between a hammer and an anvil, the Assassin castles fell one by one until their Syrian powerbase was totally destroyed.

The Assassins were wiped out as an independent faction but some still operated in the years following the fall of their stronghold, most notably making an attempt on Edward I of England during his Crusade. By the late-13th century, however, the Assassins had ceased to exist as a co-ordinated group. The Ismaili ultimately failed to effectively challenge the other major powers and carve out a kingdom of their own, but in trying, they forged a legacy that would echo through the ages.

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MARY S LOVELL

**Author
Bio**

Mary S Lovell has published ten best-selling biographies including *The Mitford Girls* that was based on interviews with four of the sisters: Debo, Diana, Pam and Decca.



HITLER'S BRITISH FANGIRL

A Nazi, a fascist, a communist, a duchess,
a novelist and a countrywoman - the
Mitford sisters defined 1930s Britain

Written by Mary S Lovell

In the years between the two world wars, especially during the Great Depression, public opinion was divided between those who believed fascism could help the problems besetting Europe, and those who espoused socialism as the solution. Belief in these disparate ideologies was often the cause of irreparable rifts between families.

Lord Redesdale was probably more affected than most, for his home, Asthall Manor in rural Oxfordshire, was the site of pitched battles of internecine warfare. Hammers and sickles and swastikas were etched into his windows with diamond rings, appropriate flags flew either side of the schoolroom down the middle of which a line had been painted, and posters and cuttings of political heroes were attached to the walls, much as today's teenagers display pop idols.

David Mitford, Lord Redesdale, was known as 'Farve' to his six daughters - Nancy, Pam, Diana, Unity, Decca and Debo. They all believed they were barely educated, though they received an average education for aristocratic girls. Their only brother, Tom, was sent to boarding school at eight, naturally ("It's different for 'Tom. Tom's a boy!"), but education for all the sisters began with the three Rs taught by their mother, 'Muv'. Her expectations were fairly simple. By six, each had to be capable of reading aloud *The Times* leader and producing accounts to explain how they spent their pocket money.

Once this hurdle had been achieved, they were duly turned over to a series of governesses, and although occasionally some of these teachers introduced a spot of shoplifting or a card game of Racing Demon into the curriculum, in the main the girls were urged to develop their ideas by extra-curricular reading and discussion. Fortunately, the girls had one of the finest libraries in the country in their home - inherited from their grandfather - and were encouraged to read freely. At first they enjoyed tales of adventure, but when the great debate began, 12-year-old Decca was likely to be found reading Beverly Nichols' indictment of war *Cry Havoc* while Unity quoted from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. They devoured newspapers and joined in lively debate at dinner - although on one night each week when they were allowed to speak only French, the sisters recalled it was strangely quiet.

Nancy, the eldest child, was 16 by the time the youngest, Deborah (Debo), made an appearance in 1920, and so had the different outlook that was natural between an Edwardian child and one born into the newly minted world of the flapper, motor cars and women's suffrage. She was an adult and Debo was scarcely into double figures when the ideological rivalry first sprang up between their teenage sisters. At the time, Unity and Jessica (Decca) were expanding their self-education and expounded passionate opinions in the linen cupboard - the warmest place to be when

WHO WERE THE MITFORDS?

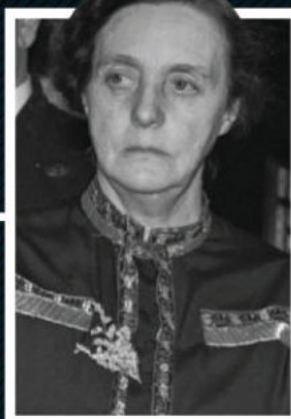
David Freeman-Mitford, 2nd Baron Redesdale 1878-1958

'Farve' upon whom Nancy based her fictional character 'Uncle Matthew'. The Mitfords are a family of landed gentry from Northumberland.



Sydney Bowles 1880-1963

Long-suffering 'Muv' was the daughter of Conservative MP and journalist Thomas Gibson Bowles, who founded *Vanity Fair* magazine, and may have been from whom the literary sisters gained their strong story-writing abilities.



Nancy 1904-73

The eldest Mitford sister was a brilliant, perceptive and successful writer, but often cruel in her wit when writing about the family. She was destined never to marry the love of her life, a Free French officer named Gaston Palewski.



Pamela 1907-94

The least known of the Mitford sisters was the quiet one who loved the countryside, and was adored by the poet John Betjeman. As an adult, she had her Aga painted to match the brilliant blue of her eyes.



Diana 1910-2003

The beauty who alienated her family when she fell in love with Oswald Mosley, and espoused his extreme right-wing ideology. Highly intelligent and fiercely loyal, she also became a bestselling writer.



Unity 1914-48

Idolised Adolf Hitler and became his friend because she could make him laugh and relax as no one else could. A failed suicide attempt left her brain damaged. Ideologically opposed to Decca though they loved each other.



Jessica 'Decca' 1917-96

The family rebel who became a leading communist in the USA. Unlikely author of one of the most amusing books on the Mitfords, she also wrote serious journalism and was an incredibly successful writer.



Deborah 'Debo' 1920-2014

When her husband succeeded to the dukedom, they inherited millions and turned the neglected Chatsworth estate into a thriving success. She was an acclaimed writer who charmed everyone.



Above: Unity shows her younger sister, Decca, a book. Despite their ideological differences in later life, the sisters loved each other dearly

they were not in the schoolroom, as their thrifty mother did not allow fires during the daytime. It began comfortably enough, for of all the sibling relationships in the Mitford family, arguably the love between Unity and Decca was the strongest and would prove to be the most enduring.

Unlikely as it seems with hindsight, Unity was conceived in a town called Swastika during a gold-mining expedition to Canada by her parents, was born in London on the eve of World War I and was christened Unity Valkyrie. Later, when she had become a virtual 'Nazi maiden', she would come to believe that these facts were not purely coincidental, but initially she came down on the side of fascism simply to oppose Decca, her nearest sister and best friend, who espoused communism. Unity triumphantly pointed to the wonderful improvements to the German economy and infrastructure under Chancellor Hitler (years before he became known as one of the most evil men in history) while Decca's Bolshevism represented to most the brutal murder of the tsar and his family.

As arguments swirled between the teenagers, other members of the family became embroiled. The older sisters - Nancy, Pam and Diana - had their own beliefs. By then Nancy was part of a smart Oxford-educated literary set (the 'Brideshead bunch'), with fashionable leftist values. Pam was scarcely concerned with politics and was far more interested in the breeding lines of pedigree cows. Diana, however - the beauty of the family, already engaged to Bryan Guinness, heir of the uber-rich brewing family - was focusing on her trousseau and learning how to run her own establishment. She thought that when you looked at what was happening in Germany under Chancellor Hitler, and what had occurred in Russia under Stalin, fascism was probably the more palatable of the two. Horse-mad Debo could never see what all the fuss was about. All she cared about at the time was hunting with the Heythrop Hunt as often as she could since she had a crush on the bachelor master. When told that he was to be married, she fainted.

As the 1920s gave way to the 1930s, things were changing for the sisters. Diana's nuptials started a rash of engagements - both Nancy and Pam accepted proposals that came to nothing but

"Unity's uncritical persistence led to her becoming a regular member of Hitler's off-duty inner circle"

provoked discussion by the younger girls about their own ambitions for the future. Unity declared she intended to go to Germany and meet Hitler, Decca insisted she would run away and become a communist, and Debo thought she would rather like to marry a duke. To prepare, Decca opened a 'Running Away Account' at Farve's bank.

It was a few years later that everything turned bitter. Diana's previously happy marriage hit the rocks when she met and fell hopelessly in love with the firebrand politician Oswald Mosley. The ambitious Mosley was also married to the daughter of an earl, and he would not leave his wife, so Diana left Bryan and lived as Mosley's part-time mistress in a flat in Eton Square. The sisters were banned from seeing this social pariah, although they sometimes visited secretly. But the important factor of this relationship was that Mosley had already begun his swing to the far right of politics, and Diana - besotted - swung with him, so that she and Unity became politically aligned in the great debate between the sisters. When the sisters visited Germany in 1933, Diana and Unity attended the Nuremberg Rally, were mesmerised by Hitler's performance and the fanaticism of his followers (which seemed to be "everybody"), and duly agreed this was Europe's salvation. Diana felt Mosley would benefit from some of Hitler's techniques as an orator.

Unity persuaded Muv to allow her to spend a year in Munich learning German, rather than go to Paris for French lessons as her sisters had done. Setting out to fulfil her ambition to meet Hitler, she stalked him in her spare time. She discovered where he liked to eat and went there for lunch every day. After some months, when he had noticed her a few times, he asked an aide to enquire about the identity of this tall, slender, blonde and blue-eyed young woman who could have been a model for his ideal of Aryan womanhood, and she was invited to his table. It did not happen instantly, but Unity's uncritical persistence led to her becoming a regular member of Hitler's off-duty inner circle and friends with most of the Nazi high command. She was even part of the official train when Hitler swept into Austria after the Anschluss. The simple secret of Unity's success with him, according to Diana, was that she made him 'blither' (giggle), but his henchmen feared Unity's influence on their leader.



Unity, Diana and Nancy at Lord Stanley of Aldernay's wedding in 1932



Diana Mitford relaxes at home with her two sons along with Unity, visiting from Germany, December 1935

Hitler's British jungirl

Decca, meanwhile, had made contact with the family black sheep, Esmond Romilly. He was the nephew of Winston Churchill's wife Clementine (who was Farve's first cousin) and at 17 was a year younger than Decca. He was an ardent communist for which, along with bad behaviour, he was expelled from school. Muv would never have allowed Decca to visit her aunt in Wiltshire had she known Esmond would be there. But he was. Decca, already half in love with Esmond before they met, agreed within hours of being introduced to marry him and run away to Spain to fight Franco's fascists. Her running away fund came in handy.

They kept the elopement secret for some weeks, as it was believed Decca was on holiday with the family of a girl friend. When the truth came out, the story made headlines for a month while the underage runaways were pursued through France and Spain with rewards offered for information about them. It always helps if one can pull a few strings and Anthony Eden eventually supplied passage on a navy destroyer for family members to travel to face the errant couple in a squalid bedsit in south-west France. But it was too late to stop the relationship; Decca was

pregnant and so, with serious misgivings by both families, they were allowed to marry. Muv was the only family member present.

When she returned home, Muv considered the disastrous family situation. Diana had now married Mosley at the home of Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels and his wife, Magda.

Hitler was the guest of honour. Unity was now close friends with Hitler and had written some highly contentious anti-Semitic articles in British and German newspapers, duly illustrated with images of Unity throwing smart Nazi salutes. These attracted much unfavourable comment and even more headlines. Decca was married to Esmond, whom the Redesdales loathed. "Why," Muv wailed, "must all my daughters fall in love with dictators?"

By the time war broke out four years later, both Nancy and Pam had married, though not successfully. Pam never entered the political debate (though she was cross when animal food was rationed). Nancy had begun to write successfully, and had lined up politically with her elite left-wing chums. When Mosley was arrested and imprisoned under the infamous Rule 18b as a danger to the state along with 'enemy aliens', Nancy felt it was her "duty" to inform on Diana. She called on a senior Home Office official and told him Diana was at least as dangerous as Mosley, "if not more," for Diana, like Unity, had become a friend of Hitler. As a consequence, Diana, who was breastfeeding her

"Diana, who was breastfeeding her 12-week-old baby when arrested, spent most of the war in prison"

12-week-old baby when arrested, spent most of the war in Holloway Prison without charge or trial.

Unity, because of her family connections to Churchill and other influential British government figures, as well as her unique friendship with Hitler, had come to believe it was her *raison d'être* to prevent war between the two countries she loved. When she failed to do so, she walked into a park near her flat in Munich and shot herself in the head with a pistol given to her by Hitler. By a miracle ("a

matter of millimetres," said the doctors) she did not die. She was given first-class treatment organised and paid for by Hitler, and with the help of Prime Minister Churchill (strings again), Muv managed to get permission for herself and Debo to travel through wartime Europe to meet the private hospital train, also provided by Hitler, that conveyed Unity to Calais where

she was taken onto a cross-Channel ferry. Unity survived her suicide attempt, but she was seriously brain-damaged, and died eight years later from meningitis associated with her head wound.

Decca and Esmond had fled to the USA after their baby died of measles, but Esmond joined the air force when war was declared and returned to England. He was killed during a bombing raid and Decca's second child was born shortly after. She eventually remarried and, with her second husband, Bob, carried on the fight for communism in the USA, becoming a leading communist and freedom fighter. Suspected as a ringleader, she was questioned in the McCarthy witch-hunt trials and probably escaped a conviction only by hiding out for months. Inexplicably, although she now hated Diana, Decca always loved Unity and forgave her allegiance to Hitler. She said Unity's death was one of the most traumatic things in her life (the deaths of her baby and Esmond being the others).

After the war - during which their brother Tom was killed in action - things settled down between the sisters, and Diana once said it wasn't until she



Deborah Mitford and her father walk down the aisle on her wedding day, April 19th 1941



Unity Mitford, in Blackshirt uniform, talks with Fritz Stadelmann, Hitler's adjutant, in Berlin, Germany, 1933



Unity Mitford leaves a hotel on a stretcher in Folkestone for her home in High Wycombe after a visit to Germany



had read *The Mitford Girls* that she realised quite how much Nancy and Decca had come to hate her. Had Nancy joined in the “what I want to be when I grow up” conversation, she would indubitably have said: “A successful writer.” She certainly achieved that, but her parents were hurt by some of her characterisations of them. She became rich from her novels and her work is never out of print.

Debo, too, went on to achieve her childhood ambition. In 1941, she married Andrew Cavendish, younger son of the Duke of Devonshire. He was not destined to inherit but when his elder brother, Billy, was killed in the war, Andrew became the heir and eventually succeeded to the dukedom. Together, in a marriage that lasted over 60 years until his death in 2004, Debo and Andrew transformed a debt-ridden estate into a hugely successful business that is present-day Chatsworth House in Derbyshire.

Curiously, for six children who considered themselves inadequately educated, four of them became bestselling writers – Nancy, Diana, Decca and Debo. But perhaps long-suffering Muv should have the last word on these remarkable sisters who drained the last dregs from the 20th century. “Whenever I see a headline beginning with ‘Peer’s daughter’,” she once famously remarked, “I know that one of you children has been in trouble.”

Hitler's British fangirl

A SOCIETY GIRL'S GUIDE TO GETTING BY

Edwardian England has strict rules on how to behave. Here's a primer for acting proper



Dress to impress

Only your best gown and jewellery will do at the dinner table. Once seated, ladies must place their evening gloves on their lap until the meal is finished, and hands must never touch the table.



Master mealtime etiquette

Refrain from tucking-in until your hostess has taken a bite, and don't believe everything Hollywood tells you – the lord and lady would sit in the middle, not at the ends, of the table to interact with guests.



Sit up straight

The back of a chair is purely for the servant to hold and you mustn't lean against it. Nannies teach young children how to sit properly by strapping a knife to the chair.



Hide your emotions

English men and women don't express emotion so physical contact should be kept to a stiff handshake, even when encountering a close friend.



Avoid scandal

Be on your best behaviour, even behind closed doors. If the newspapers get a whiff of scandal, then you'll most certainly be splashed all over the front pages by morning.



Marry for money

Finding an ideal match is rarely a matter of the heart. You'll do well to remember a marriage of convenience – for power and land – is the most desirable thing of all.



Great citadel

The outer wall of the 18th-century citadel was nine metres high and six metres thick. It offered superb fighting positions for communist troops. In the first three days of the battle, the Marines refrained from using naval gunfire, air strikes and long-range artillery support to limit damage to the citadel.

Tank cannon

The M48A3 90mm main gun was the only ground-combat weapons system the Marines fielded in the first phase of the battle that was not matched by the NVA. It was used to blast communist strongpoints and bunkers established among buildings and residences in both sections of the city. The tanks drew heavy fire from the enemy throughout the urban battle, resulting in high casualties among tank crews.

Armour-infantry teams

Tanks spearheaded the advance through rubble-strewn streets with flak-vested infantry fire teams crouching behind them for cover. South Vietnamese troops and US Marines had to painstakingly retake Hue one block at a time. The Marines used tanks and recoilless rifles to blast holes in concrete buildings through which infantry teams could make their assaults.

NVA bunkers

Communist troops transformed concrete-walled buildings and homes into strongholds with crew-served weapons, such as mortars, machine guns and recoilless rifles. Communist snipers chiselled through the concrete to craft expertly concealed firing positions.

Marine assault rifle

The select-fire M16 5.56mm rifle used a 20-round magazine. It was made of steel, aluminium alloy and composite plastics that made it light in comparison to its heavier predecessor, the M-14. As a result, each infantryman was able to carry more ammunition.



BATTLE OF HUE

NORTHERN SOUTH VIETNAM

31 JANUARY 1968 – 24 FEBRUARY 1968

Written by William E Welsh

The dark clouds, steady drizzle and boarded-up buildings heightened the sense of foreboding as the US Marines of Corporal Glenn Lucas's point squad approached the Thuong Tu Gate to the Hue Citadel. As they drew closer, they were struck by a hailstorm of fire from soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) in concealed positions along the fortress wall and inside the gate. Half of the men in the squad were knocked to the ground. The Marines returned fire with machine guns. Commander Captain Charles Meadows received permission to abort the mission from Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Gravel, but it would take the Marines two hours to safely pull back to the Nguyen Hoang Bridge.

Earlier that afternoon, Gravel had been ordered to lead two companies of Marines across the only remaining intact bridge over the Perfume River - which divided the city into northern and southern parts. Their objective was to link up with the beleaguered personnel from the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN) 1st Infantry Division headquarters, trapped in the north-east corner. The following day, ARVN relief forces reached their fellow soldiers in the citadel from the north. It would be more than ten days before the Marines returned to the citadel.

The communist offensive occurred on the Vietnamese New Year holiday, Tet, to give them the element of surprise when they struck Hue, the third largest city. Aware of the overwhelming strength of

the US military forces, the communists knew they would only be able to hold Hue for a short amount of time, but because it was the historical heart and soul of South Vietnam, the attack had great propaganda value.

In the early hours of 31 January, the 6th Regiment of the NVA captured the citadel on the north bank of the Perfume River, and the 4th Regiment seized the south side. Despite their impressive whirlwind attack, the communists made several key mistakes on the first day. They not only failed to overrun the ARVN headquarters unit and the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) compound, but they also failed to seal off Route 1 so that US Marine forces at Phu Bai Combat Base 13 kilometres away could not quickly reach the south side.

The ARVN and US Marine Corps forces began counterattacking from their respective perimeters on 4 February. On 11 February, at the request of the South Vietnamese, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, deployed by boat and helicopter to the northern end of the citadel to assist ARVN forces in clearing the last enemy troops from the citadel.

As the battle drew to a close, ARVN forces were given the honour of retaking the Imperial Palace inside the citadel and replacing the Viet Cong banner on the main flagpole with the South Vietnamese flag. After the battle, the mass graves of 2,800 civilians executed by the Viet Cong during the occupation were discovered. For the South Vietnamese, Hue was a dark chapter in a long war.

NVA-VC Army

NVA FORCES
4 BATTALIONS
VC FORCES
6 BATTALIONS



GENERAL VO NGUYEN GIAP LEADER

The defence minister masterminded the Tet Offensive in hopes of inciting an uprising in South Vietnam.

Strengths Struck cultural centre of Hue with overwhelming strength.

Weakness Mistakenly believed that NVA commanders were as skilled as the US commanders.



NORTH VIETNAMESE REGULARS KEY UNIT

The North Vietnamese were well supplied in the early stage of the battle because sympathisers had stockpiled food and ammunition.

Strengths High morale and a willingness to die fighting for the reunification of Vietnam.

Weakness Suffered from deprivation and diseases, such as malaria, living in primitive conditions in the jungles of South Vietnam.



RPG-2 KEY WEAPON

The hand-held, rocket-propelled grenade launcher gave NVA and VC soldiers the ability to knock out enemy armoured vehicles and strongpoints.

Strengths Rugged and very easy to operate.

Weakness Only accurate at short distances.

02 Attack on the south side

The 804th NVA Battalion supported by Viet Cong militia simultaneously strikes the newer, triangular-shaped residential portion of Hue south of the Perfume River also under cover of darkness on the morning of 31 January. The communists attack the local headquarters of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam, where 200 US technical personnel defend their compound against attacks by communist troops armed with mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns and automatic rifles.



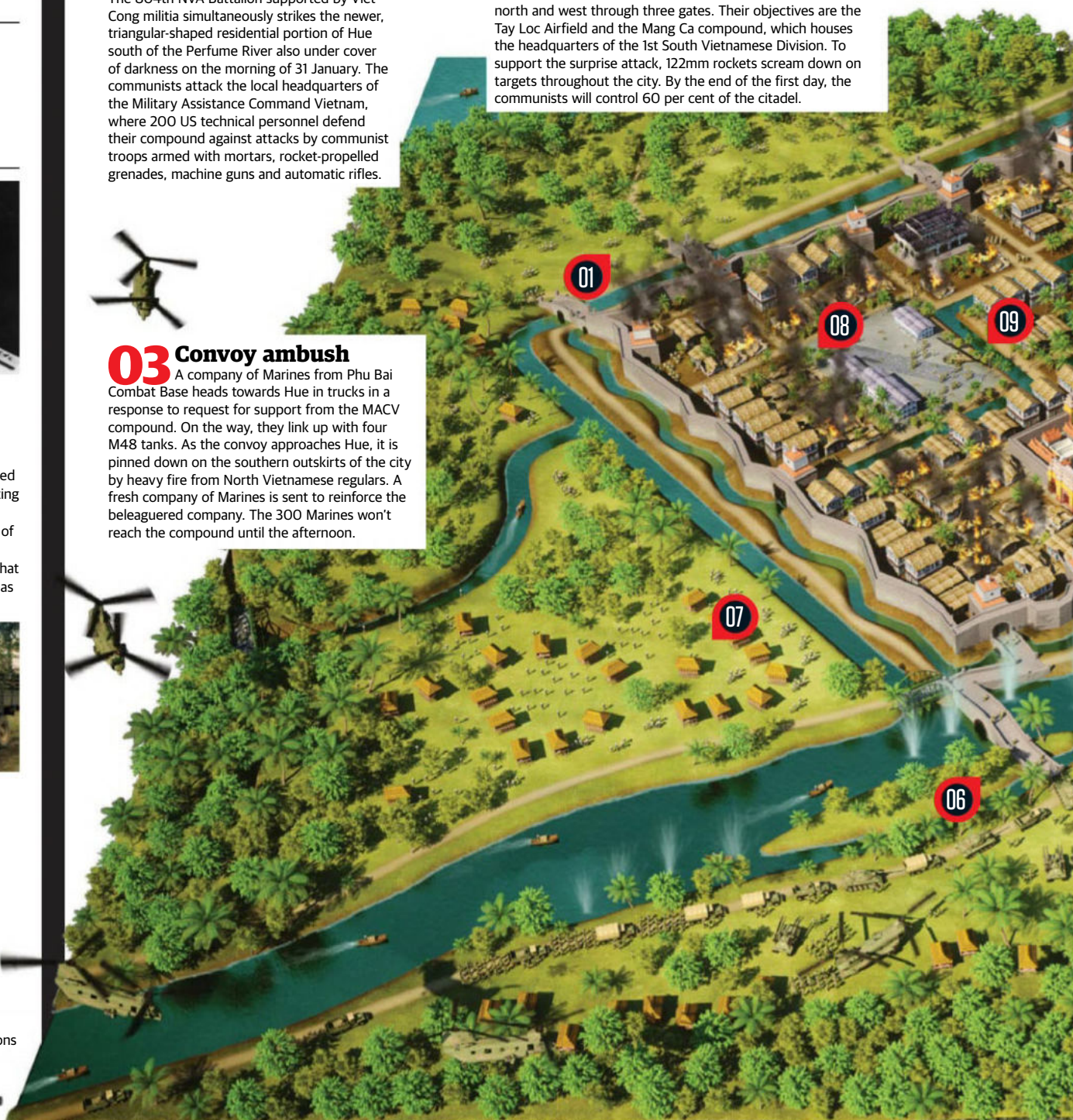
03 Convoy ambush

A company of Marines from Phu Bai Combat Base heads towards Hue in trucks in a response to request for support from the MACV compound. On the way, they link up with four M48 tanks. As the convoy approaches Hue, it is pinned down on the southern outskirts of the city by heavy fire from North Vietnamese regulars. A fresh company of Marines is sent to reinforce the beleaguered company. The 300 Marines won't reach the compound until the afternoon.



01 Night assault on the citadel

At 3.30am on 31 January 1968, three battalions of North Vietnamese soldiers storm into the citadel from the north and west through three gates. Their objectives are the Tay Loc Airfield and the Mang Ca compound, which houses the headquarters of the 1st South Vietnamese Division. To support the surprise attack, 122mm rockets scream down on targets throughout the city. By the end of the first day, the communists will control 60 per cent of the citadel.



04 Firefight at Nguyen Hoang Bridge

Company G of the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, receives orders in the late afternoon of the first day to cross an intact bridge over the Perfume River and link up with the South Vietnamese surrounded by communist forces. The bridge is too light to support the tanks, so they furnish covering power from the south bank. During a two-hour firefight, the hard-fighting Marines cross the river, but fierce enemy fire drives them back. Of 150 Marines engaged, one-third are casualties.

05 South Vietnamese Forces Rally

Brigadier General Ngo Quang Truong requests help from units of the 1st Division of the ARVN near Hue on behalf of the beleaguered divisional headquarters inside the citadel. All of the units responding suffer heavy losses fighting their way through enemy forces in an effort to reach the headquarters. Once they arrive, they recapture Tay Loc Airfield.

10 Recapture of the emperor's palace

ARVN Black Panther rangers clear the Imperial Palace of communist troops. On 24 February, the rangers replace the Viet Cong flag that has flown at the main gate for 25 days with the South Vietnamese flag.

09 Marines to the rescue

The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, arrives in the citadel on 11 February to clear the eastern half of the sprawling fortress. One of the most daunting tasks they face is clearing the enemy from the archway tower in the north-eastern wall.

08 Fighting in the citadel

Elite South Vietnamese troops go toe-to-toe with the North Vietnamese regulars inside the citadel in early February. When the South Vietnamese capture the northwest wall of the citadel on 4 February, the North Vietnamese launch a successful counterattack.



ARVN FORCES
11 BATTALIONS
US FORCES 3 MARINE
BATTALIONS + 3 US
ARMY BATTALIONS



BRIGADIER GENERAL FOSTER C LAHUE, USMC LEADER

The assistant commander of the 1st Marine Division.

Strengths Pressed the attack despite stifling rules of engagement.

Weakness Underestimated the enemy threat and fed reinforcements piecemeal.



US MARINES KEY UNIT

The US Marines were entrusted with helping defend against communist insurgency.

Strengths The elite Marines excelled at offensive operations.

Weakness Hampered by rules of engagement that initially prohibited artillery and air support in an effort to spare civilians.



M48A3 PATTON TANK KEY WEAPON

Spearheaded attacks through the city protecting infantry squads.

Strengths Capable of knocking out strongpoints with its 90mm cannon.

Weakness Unable to operate on some narrow streets inside the citadel and vulnerable to RPGs.

06 Marine counterattack in south Hue

A force of 1,000 US Marines fights block by block to clear the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong from the south side of the city. The Marines are supported by M48 tanks, trucks armed with quad .50 machine guns and a low-silhouette tracked vehicle called an Ontos with a turret supporting two arms, each of which holds three recoilless rifles. Although the Marines clear Hue's south side of large-scale communist forces by 10 February, they continue to conduct sweeps against snipers.

07 Air Cavalry blocking attack

Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade of the US Army's 1st Air Cavalry Division land west of Hue on 3 February with orders to cut the communist supply line to depots running west from Hue to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They become entangled in heavy combat with entrenched communist forces.

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What if... The Entente had marched on Berlin in 1918?

In late 1918, the Allied powers declined to advance on the kaiser's capital. How could things have changed had they gone ahead?

Written by Michael Haskew

In a railroad car at Compiègne, France, on 11 November 1918, the armed forces of Imperial Germany surrendered to the Entente, effectively ending World War I. Although the armistice brought an end to the fighting on the Western Front, civil unrest was already sweeping Germany, fomenting potential revolution at home and giving rise to the "stab in the back" theory that contributed during the interwar years to the rise of the Nazi Party and the coming of World War II. What if the Great War had continued in the autumn of 1918 and Allied forces had pushed to capture Berlin?

Following the rejection of an ultimatum for unconditional surrender, General Erich Ludendorff, commander of German forces in the field, prepares as he can for the Allied onslaught that is sure to come. The Germans have spent much of their combat effectiveness during their failed offensive in the spring of 1918, and shortages of men and war materiel have reduced the army to a shadow of its former self. Desertion is a growing problem, and Ludendorff fears that military discipline will crumble in the face of renewed hostilities.

On 15 November, the Allies unleash a massive offensive all along the Western front. British forces

drive across the old battlefields of Flanders, through Belgian Wallonia and on to Liege, pausing briefly to resupply. Crossing the German frontier, the British encounter diminishing resistance from the enemy and complete the ejection of German forces from northern France and Belgium.

South of the British advance, French troops move into Alsace, threatening the German left flank as Ludendorff retires across the River Rhine. Meanwhile, American forces under General John Pershing race for the crossings of the River Meuse near Sedan. Fighting is heavy, but weather hampers the Allied offensive. By late December, British, French and American forces consolidate their front, drawing up along the west bank of the Rhine, poised to renew their offensive the following spring.

On 12 March 1919, the Allies, under the unified command of French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, launch the final offensive to capture Berlin. Rapidly crossing the Rhine, the British occupy the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, and march into Cologne. The Americans jump off near the German city of Koblenz at the confluence of the Rhine and its tributary, the Moselle. Their advance on Frankfurt meets light resistance, and the city falls

within days. Victory in the Twelve Days' Battles shatters German resistance.

British forces sweep across the plain of northern Germany to the gates of Berlin. A brief squabble develops among the Allied commanders for the honour of taking the German capital, however, when Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates on 20 April, Berlin is declared an open city.

The Allies formally occupy Berlin the following day, enacting martial law and quelling the unrest between communist and right-wing paramilitary groups. Occupation zones are established, and a provisional German government is given limited autonomy. A decade of military occupation follows, and only when a democratic German government is deemed stable are Allied troops withdrawn.



MICHAEL HASKEW

Michael Haskew has researched and written on military history topics for more than 30 years. He has contributed to numerous books and periodicals and is the author of more than 20 books on historical subjects, including *West Point 1915: Eisenhower, Bradley, And The Class The Stars Fell On*, and *De Gaulle: Lessons In Leadership From The Defiant General*.

How would it be different?

Armistice refused

The Allies outright reject the first German request for an armistice, demanding unconditional surrender. The Germans refuse. **4 October 1918**

The Allies advance

Allied soldiers cross into German territory after pushing the Germans back from defensive positions along the Franco-German frontier. **10 December 1918**

Continued fighting

Heavy losses are sustained on both sides as guerrilla-style war against the Allies continues while German troop formations begin to disintegrate. Civil unrest grows across Germany as communist and right-wing factions collide. **16 December 1918**

Wilhelm pushed out

A provisional government is established in Berlin, and Kaiser Wilhelm II has virtually no continuing role in the conduct of the war. **31 December 1918**

Attempted coup in Berlin

Communist revolutionaries stage an attempt to overthrow the provisional German government, seizing numerous buildings in Berlin. Troops of the right-wing Freikorps quell the uprising with force. **6 January 1919**

What if... THE ENTENTE HAD MARCHED ON BERLIN IN 1918?



Allied colours fly from the Brandenburg Gate as German soldiers surrender their weapons

Germans begin to crumble
During the so-called Twelve Days' Battles, Allied troops destroy the remnants of three German armies, and organised enemy resistance rapidly wanes. **12-24 March 1919**

The Allies smell victory
Allied commanders meet in Pershing's field headquarters as their forces approach Berlin. A squabble ensues as to whose command will be the first to enter the capital. **9 April 1919**

Berlin is taken
In a compromise, a multinational Allied contingent is escorted into Berlin by a delegation of provisional government officials. Negotiations conclude with the surrender of the German capital. **21 April 1919**


Martial law enacted
Although the campaign has been costly, the capture of Berlin is virtually bloodless. The Allies impose martial law, arresting the leaders of prominent communist and right-wing factions. **30 April 1919**

Occupation begins
Germany is divided into British, French, and American occupation zones. The provisional German government is given limited autonomy, and a decade of occupation follows. **21 May 1919**

THE LAST OF THE MEDICI

Written by Tim Williamson

Explore the depraved world of the last grand duke and discover how the most powerful house in Italy came to an end



On 24 June 1729, all of Florence was abuzz celebrating the Feast Day of Saint John the Baptist - the city's most important religious festival. As usual the day was filled with drinking, dancing and the famous Palio horse race bursting through the city streets and into the surrounding countryside. Puncturing this frivolity was the occasional solemn prayer or frenzied procession in and out of the city's grand churches.

Into this scene crept a solitary ornate closed carriage, bearing the gilded symbol of Florence's ruler: six circles arranged on a golden shield - the Medici coat of arms. Winding its way through the streets, curious citizens could hear a low murmuring from within, as though some



The last of the Medici

sickly creature were suffering a slow and torturous death. Occasionally the carriage would stop, the door would swing open and a grimacing, powdered face would appear from the gloomy interior.

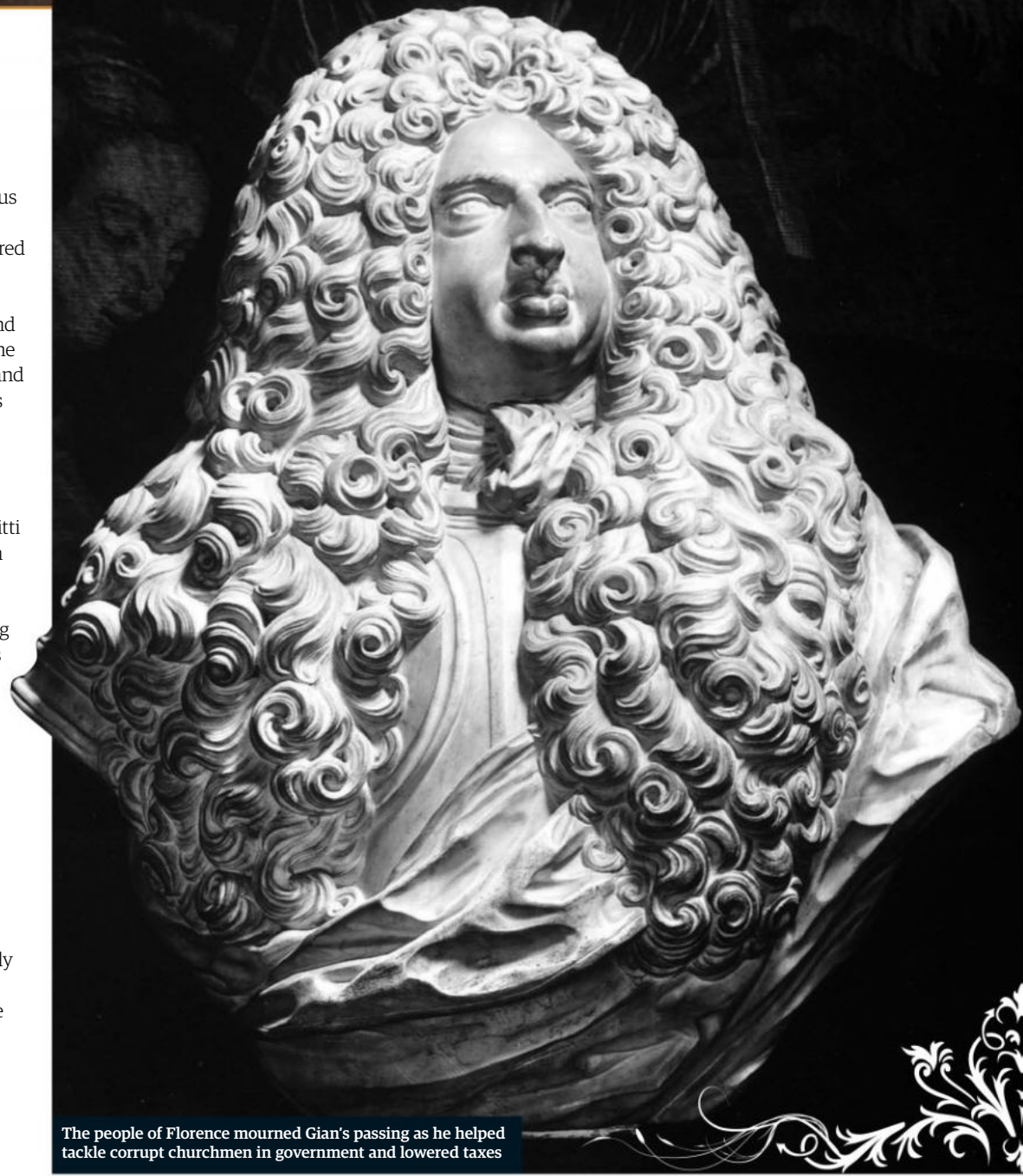
After turning a tired gaze across the faces of perplexed onlookers, the man heaved forward and vomited, his large wig quivering on its perch as he did so. This was Gian Gastone de' Medici, the grand duke of Tuscany, meeting his people. Eight years later he would be dead, and along with him the once noble and powerful Medici dynasty.

Towards the end of his life, the grand duke rarely appeared in public, preferring the solitude and comforts of his magnificent residence, the Pitti Palace, than the burden of ruling Tuscany. When he did appear, as on the feast day that June, his sickly complexion and often-profane behaviour were shocking - his wretched condition reflecting the lamentable waning of the Medicis', as well as Florence's fortunes.

Although Gian Gastone was the last Medici grand duke, the dynasty had long been in decline from its former greatness. As rulers over the Renaissance's birthplace, the family had been among the greatest supporters of the genius artists and scholars the era produced, including Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. This was no exception with Gian Gastone's father and predecessor, Cosimo III, who continued the family tradition of collecting vast quantities of art, as well as patronising the city's talent, including the famous sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini.

However, Cosimo's rule over Tuscany was far from artful, and his tenure saw a large number of severe laws, taxes and fines enacted. Many other laws brought upon a harsher treatment of the Jewish population - working for or even sleeping with a Jew was punishable by a heavy fine or prison sentence. Prostitutes could even face a whipping in the street for having sex with a Jew, and this wasn't the only sanction they were forced to work around. Licences to solicit in the street came at a price of six crowns a year, while countless additional bribes were necessary to avoid harassment by the ominously named 'Office of Public Decency'. As well as raking in capital from prostitutes, Cosimo also sold off monopolies to the city traders, before selling bypasses to those monopolies at an even greater price.

Capital punishment was almost a daily spectacle in Cosimo's Florence, with more than 2,000 executions carried out in one year alone. Everything from sodomy to murder was punishable by beheading, with the latter followed up with the grisly quartering of the criminal's body for good measure. Even the innocent act of courtship was criminalised by Cosimo, with men forbidden to "dally at doors and windows by night" - those caught in coitus with a woman they shouldn't be cavorting with were subjected to torture sessions in the state dungeons.



The people of Florence mourned Gian's passing as he helped tackle corrupt churchmen in government and lowered taxes

"The prince gambled away fortunes during the trip, and what he wasn't spending on cards he was drinking away in seedy bars"

However, Cosimo's attempt to tie a strong moralistic noose around the necks of Florence's fornicators, while withdrawing extra dividends for the state, was ultimately a failure, and this was embodied in none other than his eldest son and heir, Ferdinando. The grand prince was not only highly promiscuous, but also had a preference for pretty young men, as well as many talented singers and musicians of both sexes. He lavished gifts upon his lovers, and like all good Medicis that had come before him, he was a highly generous patron, himself a talented musician and composer. From a young age he was able to play any piece of music presented to him from sight, to near perfection, and much of his time was spent organising recitals and operas, always with the utmost style and at a triple-A budget.

What did not grip the grand prince, or even mildly interest him, were the matters of state - nor producing a Medici heir to rule that state. In 1696, he returned from a festival in Venice with a new young noble mistress, and venereal disease, both to the consternation of his wife, Violante. Long before his eldest son's premature death in 1713, Cosimo had already determined he would have to look elsewhere to secure the Medici line.

Unfortunately, Cosimo's remaining son seemed even less likely to provide an heir than the dead Ferdinando. Not only was Gian Gastone not interested in women, he was actively repulsed by his wife, Anna Maria Franziska of Saxe-Lauenburg, and she by him. After being forced into the marriage on 2 July 1697, the couple had moved to Anna Maria's remote home in Bohemia, a small

KEEPING UP WITH THE MEDICIS

Introducing the saints, sinners and swines of Tuscany's once powerful dynasty



Cosimo III

THE PIOUS PATRIARCH

A stern zealot and authoritarian, Cosimo's reign was nowhere near as glorious or prosperous as either of his namesakes, and Florence rapidly declined as a city of influence during his time. His estranged wife, Marguerite Louise d'Orléans, left Florence in 1672, allowing Cosimo to indulge in entertaining guests, his substantial art collection and later in life his religion. In 1700, he travelled to Rome to add curious Catholic relics – the body parts of saints, for instance – to his collection of portraits, bronzes and sculptures. On his death, he left the state bankrupt.



Francesco Maria

THE PRANKSTER

When Cosimo foresaw neither of his two sons being capable of continuing the Medici line, he turned to his younger brother, the cardinal Francesco Maria, who was also governor of Siena. However, as with many of his relations, this Medici was neither particularly pious nor statesmanlike. A great hedonist, he spent much of his time feasting, drinking and, above all, gambling. He was also a notorious prankster, and on one occasion served a lavish meal to distinguished guests, before tricking them into thinking they had dined on roast donkey.



Grand Prince Ferdinando

THE PLAYBOY PIANIST

The Medici heir apparent was a talented musician, a generous patron of the arts and a passionate lover – though his taste in this regard did not include his wife, Violante Beatrice of Bavaria. He befriended and supported Bartolomeo Cristofori, a Florentine harpsichord maker and inventor of the pianoforte, as well as numerous other great musicians. Having contracted syphilis from a noble Venetian lady during a festival, Ferdinando's health waned and he died childless in 1713.



Electress Palatine, Anna Maria Luisa

THE STERN SISTER

Anna was a haughty character, and had more in common with her austere father than with either of her brothers. Gian Gastone despised her for playing an instrumental part in his awful marriage, and she loathed his liberal policies and immoral living. She would be the last lineal descendant of the House of Medici, but laws prevented her accession, and she refused nominal regency. In 1737, she willed all the personal property of the Medici to the Tuscan state.



Pitti Palace served as the chief residence on the Medici from the 16th century onwards. Today it houses the largest museum complex in Florence

town called Reichstadt, where the young prince became utterly depressed and withdrawn. In later life he would wholly blame his sister, Anna Maria Luisa, Electress Palatine, who was a most enthusiastic instigator of the match.

Wracked with melancholy, Gian Gastone begged his wife to be able to return to Florence, and upon her refusal consigned himself to a mostly solitary, brooding life, with increasingly frequent bouts of debauchery. His chief accomplice in this was the charismatic, charming and handsome Giuliano Dami. A peasant by birth, Dami had nonetheless risen to favour with Gian Gastone, who had been taken with the young man's looks while living in Florence.

Accompanied by Dami, and an assortment of attendants, in 1699 Gian Gastone escaped from his remote Reichstadt prison and travelled to Prague. This escapade is best described in a memoir of Gastone's reign, kept at the Biblioteca Moreniana library in Florence and translated by historian Sir Harold Acton: "There were scores of fresh young students in Prague, smooth-chinned Bohemians and Germans, who were so impecunious that on

The last of the Medici

certain days they wandered begging from door to door. In this wide preserve Giuliano could always hunt for amorous game and introduce some new and comely morsel to the Prince."

The memoir goes on to detail how the revellers indulged to excess, always at Gian Gastone's expense as well as at his encouragement. The prince gambled away fortunes during the trip, and what he wasn't spending on cards he was drinking away in seedy bars. Often, it was said, "...he ran in peril of his life. Setting forth in disguise he would join the ribald company of wretches that lolled about half-drunk in low haunts and taverns of the town." Caught up in the chaotic melee of alcohol-infused brawls, Gian Gastone would, "...put up with blows, pistol shots and sword cuts."

Eventually, of course, the trip came to an end once the money ran out. Cosimo wrote to the prince, commanding him to return to his estranged wife in Reichstadt. His escapades in Prague had certainly revived Gian Gastone's spirit, though they

"Throwing back wine like it were water, Gian Gastone would order the Ruspanti to tease, insult and even assault him"

had decayed his physical appearance and set in place a hedonistic pattern that would define the rest of his life. To quote Acton, after returning from the capital, Gian Gastone's "features began to settle into that monstrous mould of which we may see a likeness in the Uffizi Gallery."

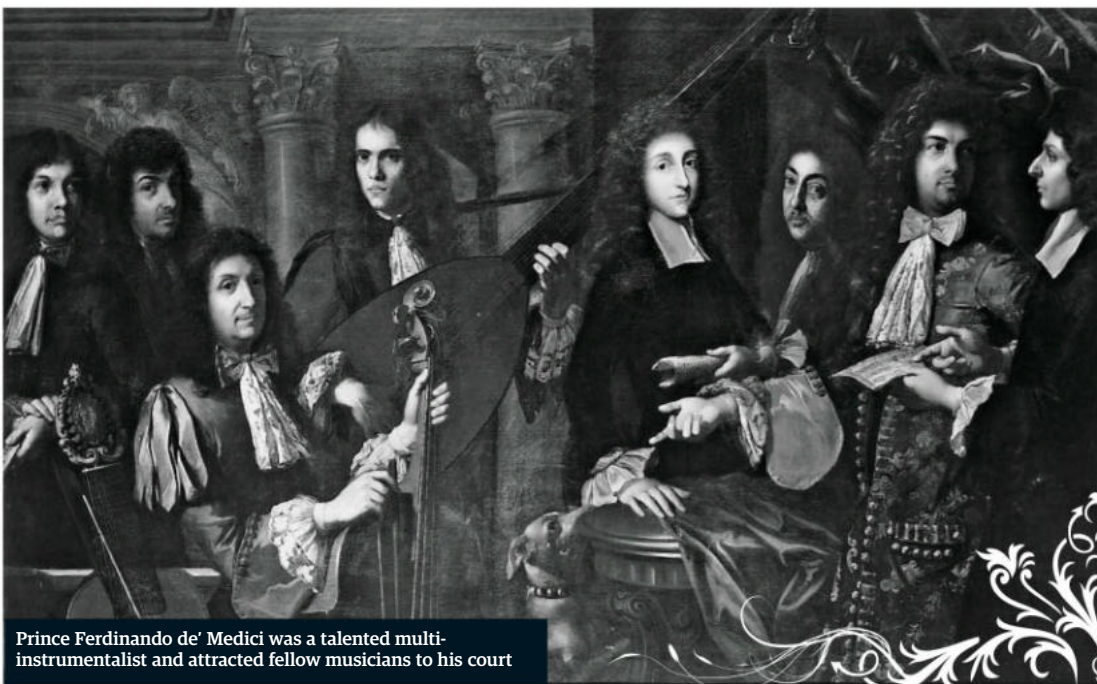
On 31 October 1723, after a prolonged illness, Cosimo III died in the presence of his confessor. In the hours up until his end he had been attended by numerous clergy and the archbishop of Pisa, who all pronounced blessings to send his soul on its final journey. He had reigned for 53 years, the longest of any Medici grand duke, and now left behind him a state of near chaos.

With no clear line of succession beyond Gian Gastone and his sister Anna Maria Luisa, the great powers of Europe hungrily vied for position over the Tuscan duchy. But the Medici prince remained as uninterested in the affairs of state and inheritance as he had ever been. He did, however, repeal many of the harshest laws and taxes enforced by his predecessor, as well as a curious payment known as the 'Pension of the Creed', which offered cash incentives to Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity. Now in his 50s and with no impediment to check him, he set about living for his own desires.

Gian Gastone's daily routine thereby became one dedicated to pleasure. Waking at around midday, he



Gian's mental health declined steadily through his life, and he spent long hours alone and drunk



Prince Ferdinando de' Medici was a talented multi-instrumentalist and attracted fellow musicians to his court

would receive official visitors while sat up in bed, at least those visitors who had filled Giuliano Dami's purse with enough crowns. Remaining in bed for the rest of the day, he would then take dinner at 5pm and supper at 2am. Between these hours was about the time he would be joined by the latest addition to the Tuscan court - the Ruspanti.

Named after the low-value coin - the ruspi - that was used to pay them for their service, the Ruspanti were a band of young men, as well as some women, recruited from Florence's streets by Dami to entertain the grand duke. One account describes them: "It mattered not from what gang of vagrant knaves and mongrels, unruly and unclean, provided they were graced with an alluring eye and the countenance of an Adonis."

Now the master of the Pitti Palace, and with no authority to stop him, Gian Gastone revived the excessive and lascivious habits that he had picked up during his time in Prague, with the help of the Ruspanti. Reclining in his bed, covered with snuff and throwing back wine like it were water, Gian Gastone would order the Ruspanti to tease, insult and even assault him - all for his own particular entertainment. The Ruspanti also performed sexual acts with one another, as well as with the grand duke, for his own pleasure and amusement. Grand dinners would also be held regularly, during which each of the Ruspanti guests were renamed after the great statesmen and clergy of Florence, and Gian Gastone would address each of them as though they were nobility.



Florence faded

Since its golden period under Cosimo I and Lorenzo de' Medici, Florence had notably declined in spirit by the time the dynasty drew its final breath. "[The city] is much sunk from what it was, for they do not reckon there are above 50,000 souls in it," wrote one foreign visitor. By the time Gian Gastone succeeded his father, many Grand Tourists noted how the streets were packed mostly with either priests or peasants. Among the grand duke's first acts was to accommodate the poor with alms and workhouses, but this did little to solve the problem.

Harassed for decades by moralistic agents of the state, as well as impatient tax collectors, the entire population had become weary, paranoid and almost destitute during Cosimo III's tenure. "The declining state of this city is very visible," wrote another visitor. "It is not very populous; nor are the inhabitants useful, the clergy making up the bulk of the people... The sick and infirm must also be very numerous where there are so many aged persons."

After the death of the last Medici grand duke in 1737, Tuscany passed into the possession of Francis Stephen, duke of Lorraine. Tuscany and Florence was no longer a powerful, independent realm, but a mere branch of the Habsburg Empire - in time, Francis Stephen became not only archduke of Austria, but also Holy Roman emperor. Before long, the Medici coat of arms was ripped from the fascias of Florence's buildings - an act symbolising the end of an era.



Cosimo III was a much sterner ruler than his son. He left Tuscany as one of the poorest areas in Europe

Gradually, the Ruspanti grew in number - eventually comprising upwards of 400 members - and the grand duke spent his time with practically no one else, all the while remaining in the confinement of his bedchamber. His sister-in-law, Violante, who was left with the daily running of the state in his absence, made efforts to force him back into the public eye, but these were to no avail. On one such occasion, she arranged a great banquet, inviting all the important aristocrats of the duchy and beyond to the Lappoggi Palace to meet with Gian Gastone, though this was to be a disaster.

Not long into the meal, Gian Gastone, "...got incapably drunk, swearing and belching as he ate his food, making occasional comments of

indescribable lewdness." Swaying back and forth at the table, while gentlemen and ladies recoiled in horror and disgust, he then suddenly raised a napkin to his mouth and promptly vomited into it. Gazing carelessly around the stunned gathering and chuckling, the grand duke then, "...wiped his mouth with the tumbling curls of his wig," before continuing to dine as though nothing had occurred. The room was hastily vacated.

This humiliation was repeated on that Feast Day in 1729, which was also the grand duke's final appearance in public. After eventually falling into a drunken stupor among the festivities, his servants carried him back to the Pitti Palace, where he would largely remain for the rest of his life, with his Ruspanti for company.

By 1737, one noble foreign visitor noted that the Tuscan duke was, "...in a pitiable condition... He could not get out of bed; he had a long beard; his sheets were very dirty." The duke's bedchamber by this point was so filthy and odorous from his permanent occupancy that his servants filled it with fresh roses every day to mask the stench and save the senses of occasional visitors.

On 10 July that same year, Gian Gastone lay ill, dying, and after desperate pleas from his relatives, accepted a priest to hear his last confession in an attempt to redeem his soul. Greeting Prior Ippolito Rosselli, the local Florentine priest brought to him, the duke uttered: "You see, we all must die." Then, after some hours, the last of the Medici line expired as a deathbed repentant.

Through History TRAINS

From steam power to high-speed engines, trains have come a long way since they first began transporting goods and people



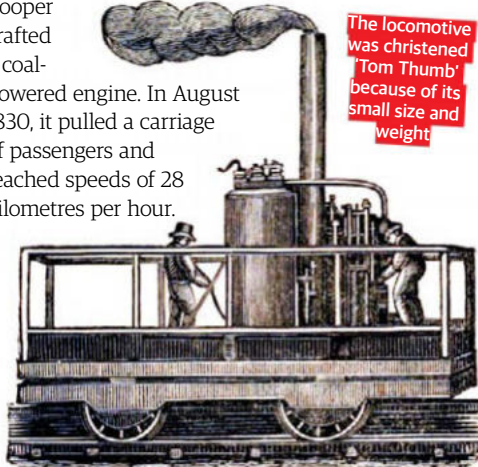
The Locomotion No.1 is now housed in the Darlington railway museum

LOCOMOTION NO. 1 1825

This simplistically named engine played a large part in the evolution of trains as we know them today. It was the first purpose-built public passenger train, engineered by George Stephenson's company, to premiere on the Stockton and Darlington line. The Locomotion No. 1 made its debut in 1825 at a grand ceremonial opening, which included several men on horses riding ahead of the engine, carrying flags with mottos such as 'Periculum privatum utilitas publica,' translating to 'The private danger is the public good'. The train of wagons pulled around 600 passengers.

THE TOM THUMB 1830

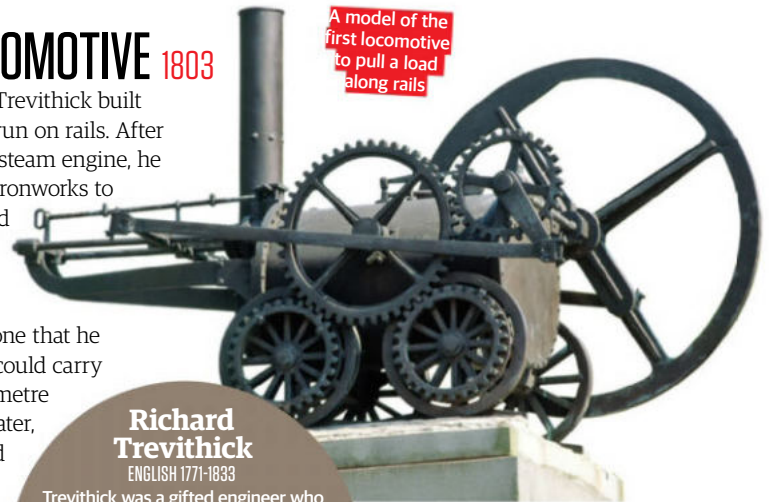
The Baltimore & Ohio railway had been chartered in 1828, but was using horse-drawn carriages rather than steam. When the animals became unable to shoulder the heavy loads over long distances, steam, proving popular in England, seemed a viable alternative. To test the idea, American inventor Peter Cooper crafted a coal-powered engine. In August 1830, it pulled a carriage of passengers and reached speeds of 28 kilometres per hour.



The locomotive was christened 'Tom Thumb' because of its small size and weight

PENYDARREN LOCOMOTIVE 1803

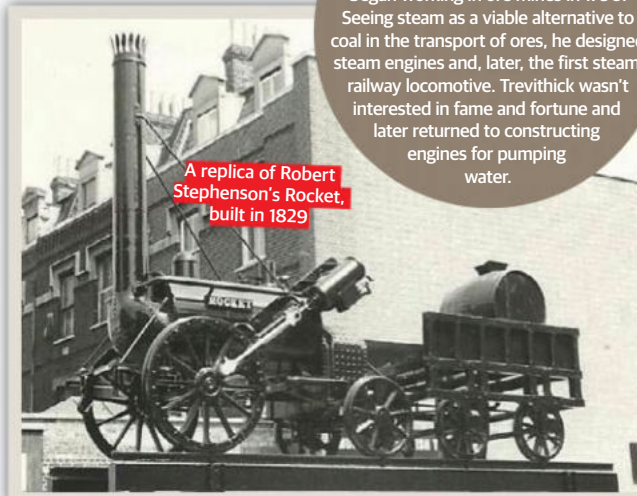
Steam-power pioneer Richard Trevithick built the world's first locomotive to run on rails. After engineering the high-pressure steam engine, he was employed by Penydarren ironworks to develop a locomotive that could transport iron and coal from mines in the Welsh valleys. Ironmaster Samuel Homfray was so confident it could be done that he bet a rival 500 guineas that it could carry ten tons of iron along a 15-kilometre railway, and about four hours later, the Penydarren locomotive had done it.



A model of the first locomotive to pull a load along rails

Richard Trevithick ENGLISH 1771-1833

Trevithick was a gifted engineer who began working in ore mines in 1790. Seeing steam as a viable alternative to coal in the transport of ores, he designed steam engines and, later, the first steam railway locomotive. Trevithick wasn't interested in fame and fortune and later returned to constructing engines for pumping water.



A replica of Robert Stephenson's Rocket, built in 1829

THE ROCKET 1829

Robert Stephenson's Rocket was built two and a half decades after Trevithick's first test rail locomotive. In that same year, the Rainhill Trials saw six engines compete to determine which was the greatest. The Rocket steamed to victory, completing more than 112 kilometres hauling varying weights. The Rocket had more tubes producing steam than its competitors, better pistons and other advantages that helped propel it to first place, and straight into the history books as one of Stephenson's greatest achievements.

FIRST UNDERGROUND RAILWAY 1863

To combat the increasing traffic in London, transport routes were built underground. The Metropolitan Railway opened the first underground route for passengers in 1863. Despite the steamy and smoky conditions, the service was overcrowded and carriages had to be borrowed from Great Western to accommodate all the passengers. The first underground carriages had gas lamps so as to "dispel any unpleasant feelings which passengers, especially ladies, might entertain against riding for so long a distance through a tunnel."



The Metropolitan Railway's first underground trains were busy and smoky



The Princess locomotive hauling passengers at Porthmadog Harbour Station c.1870

FFESTINIOG'S 'PRINCESS' AND 'MOUNTAINEER' 1863

Built to transport Welsh slate down the country's hills, the railway at Ffestiniog is the oldest of its kind. The narrow gauge of 59.7 centimetres allowed the carts, originally drawn by horses with the aid of gravity, to take tight corners. In 1863, a year of landmark advances in rail transport, the first of four small steam locomotives arrived at the railway, 'Princess' and 'Mountaineer'. That year, Ffestiniog was granted permission to take passengers, becoming the first to do so on such a narrow gauge.



Wehrmacht soldiers pose in front of the Polish armoured train, No. 13, in 1939

Peter Cooper

AMERICAN 1791-1883

Born in New York, the son of an army officer of the Revolutionary War, Cooper was an intuitive engineer despite only completing one year of education. He became a coach maker's apprentice at 17, then worked on cloth-shearing machines, and later, in 1828, went to Baltimore, where he would build the Tom Thumb engine.

ARMOURD TRAINS 1860S

Offering high speeds and sturdy engines, trains being armed for war was a natural step in transport evolution. They were used in late-19th-century conflicts including the Boer War and the American Civil War, as well as World War I and II. In World War I, the British equipped a train at Crewe with a quick-firing gun and half-armour plating. In World War II, armoured trains were developed and used by Poland, Nazi Germany and Russia. They would often carry cannons and machine guns as well as other powerful weapons.



The Mallard pictured in 1948 at King's Cross Station, London, after maintenance work

George Stephenson

ENGLISH 1781-1848

Stephenson learned the workings of engines on the job, employed on a Newcomen steam engine from the age of 19. He later became enginewright at Killingworth colliery, where he worked on and improved the steam engines there, gaining experience that would lead him toward his later, more famous inventions.

THE MALLARD 1938

The advancement of air and road travel meant that by the 1930s, the railways needed to offer faster, more comfortable services in order to compete. The LNER A4 Mallard was the embodiment of this, with its wedge-shaped front designed to pull smoke away from the cab. But the Mallard's most enduring achievement was breaking the record for reaching the highest speed of any steam locomotive in July 1938, when it travelled at an impressive 202 kilometres per hour. The record still stands today.

"The Rainhill Trials saw six engines compete to determine which was the greatest. The Rocket steamed to victory"

INTERCITY 125 1977

Introduced to British public railways in 1976, these trains were a sleek alternative to those that had gone before, which had comparatively artless rectangular designs. The InterCity was aerodynamic, based on racing car designs, and made from moulded plastic instead of sheet metal. It could reach speeds of over 200 kilometres per hour, and is also known as the HST or High Speed Train. Many InterCity models are still in use in the UK's rail fleets today, but most are to be replaced by the Japanese Hitachi Class 800 passenger trains in 2017.



The new style nose of the InterCity 125, pictured in Bradford in 1979



The class 373 travels at 299 kilometres per hour, taking passengers from London to Paris in two hours and 15 minutes

EUROSTAR 1994

Construction of the Eurotunnel began in 1988, though the first conception of a tunnel linking England to France is credited to Albert Mathieu, who imagined it back in 1802. It may have seemed unlikely then, but almost 200 years later, it became a reality. The trains that transported the first passengers under the sea to and from the continent were 'Intercapital' and 'North of London' set trains, designated class 373 in the UK, and Trans Manche Super Train in France. In September 2016, a 1994 class 373 train was retired for scrapping, having served 22 years shuttling passengers from London to France and back.



The fate of Paris is decided in a titanic battle between the brothers Ragnar and Rollo

VIKINGS: THE TRUTH

Interview by Peter Price

Discover how Michael Hirst, creator of the hit TV show *Vikings*, brought the terror of the Northmen to life in his epic series

Charting the voyages and adventures of the warrior Ragnar Lodbrok and his motley band of followers, *Vikings* cunningly interweaves myth and history to create an adventure for our time. The Vikings were Scandinavian raiders who unleashed terror across Europe and the Mediterranean for more than 300 years, from the late 8th century to the 11th century, in what is known as the Viking Age. Nowhere was safe from these fierce pagans as they sacked monasteries, cities – including Paris – and colonised parts of England, Scotland, Ireland and France.

The creator of *Vikings*, Michael Hirst, is no stranger to historical drama. Penning the award-winning, bodice-ripping series *The Tudors* and the biographical film *Elizabeth*, he has now turned his sights to Scandinavia to tell the story of this unique and often misrepresented group. Four series in, we spoke with Hirst to find out how he sorts the fact from the legend.

When writing a historical drama, accuracy is obviously extremely important. Have the facts ever stopped you from telling your story?

No, because that suggests that there is some sort of intrinsic opposition between facts and drama, and everything that I write starts with historical research. I spent a long time in universities, so for me the research part of [writing a script] is a joy and I read as much as I can. I read with an open mind, allowing characters and storylines to evolve. As the poet Dryden said, "The act of creativity is ideas and thoughts tumbling over each other in the darkness."

I have a historical researcher called Justin Pollard who provides me with information, background



and whatever else I need. What you're looking for is authenticity and truthfulness, even in drama, so as the stories evolve I will always check with Justin whether it's authentic, appropriate or reasonable to take the stories where I'm taking them. For instance, the sets are sourced from museums around the world that contain Viking artefacts, but it's the Dark Ages and there is a hell of a lot we don't know.

When we were working on the first season of *Vikings*, we showed some of the first episodes to the head of Scandinavian studies at Harvard University. He is a Swedish professor and I assumed that he would eat me alive, but he told me that this was the first time his culture has ever been taken seriously and intelligently. *Vikings* is the second biggest show across all Scandinavian countries, has reanimated an interest in Viking studies and encouraged a lot more archaeological digs.

The curator of the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo has told me that their visitor numbers have doubled because of the show; people are now proud of their ancestry again. I do have cause to think that it's a pretty authentic show given that it's a drama, and I'm very proud of that. ➔

"What you're looking for is authenticity and truthfulness, even in drama"

Michael Hirst

FROM THE SAGAS TO THE SCREEN



RAGNAR

Ragnar Lodbrok, meaning 'hairy trousers', is a thoughtful and curious man. Based on the fabled Viking of the same name, Ragnar eventually meets his end at the hands of King Ælla. Ragnar's sons will exact revenge on England by leading the Great Heathen Army to its shores.



LAGERTHA

Ragnar's first wife and a shield maiden, Lagertha carves out her own destiny in a world ruled by men. According to legend, she disguised herself as a man and fought beside Ragnar to avenge the murder of her family. She later divorces Ragnar and claims rulership of her own kingdom.



FLOKI

Building the boat that brings Ragnar to England, the eccentric Floki is the embodiment of the old Norse religion and culture. While he has no clear historical counterpart, portions of his story mirror that of the trickster god Loki. Ragnar's torture of Floki is a parallel to Odin's punishment of Loki from the sagas.



ROLLO

The mighty Rollo is the stereotypical Viking; loud, hairy and prone to violence. In the show he is Ragnar's brother who goes on to betray his family for a Frankish title. This mirrors the historical figure that became the first Duke of Normandy, 100 years before his ancestor William took the English crown in 1066.



EGBERT OF WESSEX

The charismatic and scheming king of Wessex – who then went on to take control of Mercia – Egbert is a political powerhouse in England. Like his historical counterpart, Egbert unites Wessex and Mercia and becomes a bretwalda, or high king, of England.





Ragnar's grand ambitions drew warriors from all over Scandinavia to fight with him

➤ Ragnar Lodbrok is perhaps the most famous Viking we have evidence for. How easy was it to separate the legendary figure of Ragnar from the historical one?

You can't do that because Ragnar comes out of the sagas and history as a semi-legendary character. I deliberately chose a main character that was semi-mythic, whose reputation survived down the ages and was part of the oral tradition of Viking life. You want someone who is immensely charismatic, important and who other characters in the saga talk about. In a sense, I'm writing a saga about Ragnar Lodbrok, who becomes a legendary character in the show. What is important is that historical drama will reach more people than documentaries about the same period. *Vikings* is now the fifth biggest show in the world, so millions and millions and millions of people are watching it. They don't have to all think, "This is real," but what I hope and what I know happens is that it can develop a taste for the subject.

Is that what draws you to writing historical fiction? Does it have more value than a purely fictional show?

Yes it does, and that's very important to me. It goes back to my school days when the only things I could do apart from sport were history and English, and I've combined them in my career. Personally I've never liked fantasy as, ultimately, anything can happen, which makes it meaningless. I'm writing about real people who changed the world and the way we live now. We shot the show just outside Dublin, where Viking longboats would have sailed along the coast. Connecting the past and the present in real terms is what I personally try to do. I used to hate those BBC historical dramas where the characters were like museum pieces; they never acted or spoke like human beings.

When I started writing *Vikings* I was told I wouldn't be able to write a successful show because the Vikings were nasty people. They were the people who knocked down your door in the middle of the night and took your belongings - there was no way I could make people engage with them. My response was

that first of all you don't know very much about them, their culture and religion, and if I do my job right, that will engage you.

Here is a lead character, Ragnar, who thought that he was descended from the god Odin. Odin was not just the god of dead warriors in Valhalla, he was also the god of curiosity and purging; sacrificing an eye to look into the well of knowledge. My character goes exploring to other places in his boat, not to rape and plunder, but for curiosity. He's also a family man with children and a wife that he loves, and some of his issues stem from the fact he doesn't get on with his boss.

"Connecting the past and the present in real terms is what I personally try to do"

Michael Hirst

How did you pass on your intimate knowledge of the Vikings to the actors so that they could get into the same headspace as you and then give the best performances?

We do employ quite a lot of Scandinavian actors deliberately to root the show in some kind of

THE VIKING AGE



The series closely mirrors the true timeline of events

Raid on Lindisfarne Monastery
Season 1, Episode 2

Vikings raid Northumbria
Season 1, Episode 3

Viking raid on Wessex
Season 2, Episode 2

King Egbert becomes ruler of Mercia
Season 4, Episode 8



Lagertha trains her shield maidens to form a shield wall during combat



Charles the Simple was responsible for giving French lands to the Vikings



The Vikings fortified their ships with shields to deflect ranged attacks



Ragnar's character is very different from most people's view of a typical Viking leader

immediate reality. As this was a fresh look at the subject I didn't want a hairy, clichéd Viking leader that the word 'Viking' itself brings to mind. What I was looking for was an introverted and thoughtful Viking. Travis Fimmel (who plays Ragnar) self-taped his audition from his kitchen and gave an incredibly sensitive reading of the material. The director and myself looked at the tape and thought, "Maybe it's him." Everyone else before that had been loud and shouty. They had interpreted the character as a dominant male whereas Travis absolutely captured my idea of Ragnar.

My idea for Lagertha was that here is someone who has had two children, fought in the shield wall and killed people. The casting directors would send us lots of images of beautiful actresses but we needed someone with the physicality to play a shield maiden. Katheryn Winnick is a black belt in taekwondo and karate, and this was a huge plus as I could give her scenes where she could be a believable Viking.

One of our favourite scenes was the portage of Ragnar's fleet over land to engage Rollo's fleet and the ensuing naval battle. How much of these scenes were CGI or were practical effects used?

We pride ourselves on trying to shoot with as much reality as we can. I still remember when Justin first told me about portage, which was when Vikings would carry their boats over the mountains if they found a blocked river, which is scarcely believable. After I had written the sequence I went to production and said I know we can't do this due to cost and logistical capability but they just said, "Leave it with us."

I was overjoyed and immensely impressed when I walked up to the set and there was a Longship being hoisted up a cliff face. There was a modern crane at the top of the cliff for safety reasons but the actual pulley system was a reproduction of how the Vikings would have done it themselves. Our guys actually hauled the ship up the cliff, then dragged it through the wood. We had to use CGI sometimes, of course we do. The battle of Paris had something like 3,000 warriors and 300 ships, but we take great pride in how real the show is. Our actors fight, ride, swim and row - they love it.



Vikings: Season 4, Part One is available on Blu-ray™ and DVD, courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment.



REVIEWS

All About History on the books, TV shows and
films causing a stir in the history world

BLITZED: DRUGS IN NAZI GERMANY

How hard drugs helped fuel Hitler's insanity and his followers to new lows of barbarity

Author Norman Ohler **Publisher** Allen Lane **Price** £20 **Released** Out now

Some of Hitler's biggest decisions during World War II were made while he was high on drugs. That's the astonishing findings of a new book by German author Norman Ohler, which also reveals that drug abuse wasn't just restricted to the Nazi leader, but was rife throughout the Third Reich.

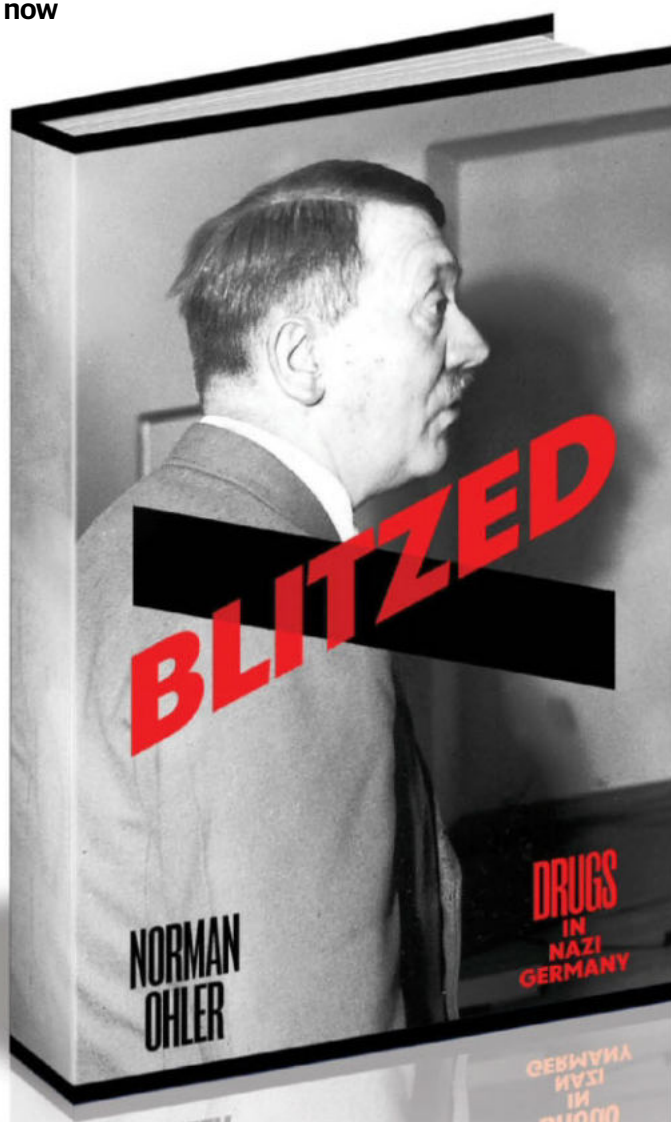
Blitzed begins in what Ohler dubs the 'Chemical Twenties' before Hitler came to power. These were the hedonistic days of the Weimar Republic, when Germany partied hard to forget the horror and humiliation of World War I. It was a time that also saw a boom in Germany's pharmaceutical industry, which was a leading manufacturer of both cocaine and morphine.

When the Nazis grabbed power in 1933, they banned these 'seductive poisons', as they called them, on the grounds that they were decadent. The new Germany, they promised, would be as virtuous and pure as its new Führer - a clean-living, abstemious vegetarian who allowed no toxins, not even coffee, to enter his body. Drug users were declared criminally insane and shipped off to concentration camps, while the Nazis' propaganda machine began linking drug abuse with the Jewish community, arguing for the eradication of both.

The Nazi Party portrayed itself as the country's new moral guardians but in reality, as Ohler's book reveals, it actually did little to eradicate widespread drug abuse, with cocaine, heroin and morphine being used by everyone from housewives and factory workers to the Führer's inner circle.

Ohler's claims about Hitler himself are backed up by the meticulously kept diary of his personal physician, Dr Theo Morrell. In the early days of the regime, Morrell would inject Hitler with vitamins and glucose shots. These kept Hitler's energy levels almost supernaturally high while boosting his immune system so he never got ill. Once the war began, however, other substances started finding their way into Hitler's bloodstream. Certainly by the time he took the fatal decision to invade Russia in 1941, steroids were in the mix. As the war progressed, and Germany started to lose, the concoctions became even more bizarre and powerful, including bull's semen (to boost testosterone), Eukodol - a pharmacological cousin of heroin - and methamphetamine.

It wasn't just Germany's Führer who was using the latter. Known today as crystal meth, this highly addictive, psychosis-inducing amphetamine helped power the war effort on both the Home Front and in battle. Indeed when Hitler launched his Blitzkrieg against Poland in 1939 and then Western Europe the following year, many of his stormtroopers were rushing on a medically prescribed 'pick-me-up' called Pervitin, which was essentially methamphetamine. Millions of doses of this drug were administered to Nazi troops. Already hard-wired to murder by years of ideological education, many of them killed and died for Hitler's racist crusade while, literally, out of their minds. WWII is much documented, but Ohler's astonishing book sheds an entirely new light on the conflict.



"Ohler's claims about Hitler himself are backed up by the meticulously kept diary of his personal physician"

CROWN OF BLOOD: THE DEADLY INHERITANCE OF LADY JANE GREY

The ultimate biography of the Nine Day Queen

Author Nicola Tallis **Publisher** Michael O'Mara Books **Price** £20 **Released** Out now

Lady Jane Grey has been consigned to the history books as scarcely more than a tragic victim of adult ambition. This in spite of the fact that she was fiercely intelligent - attracting attention from notable scholars from both England and on the continent - and so strong-willed and fervent in her religious beliefs that she was willing to die for her faith, and indeed did.

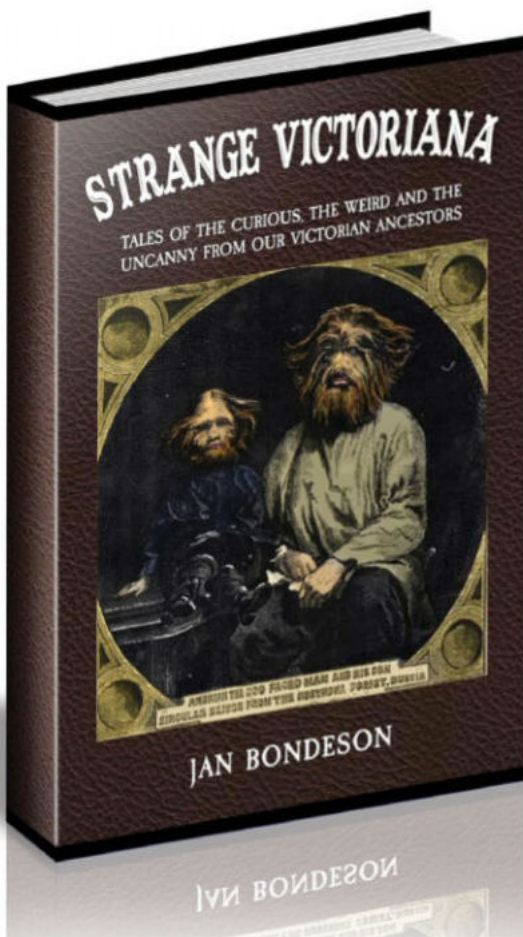
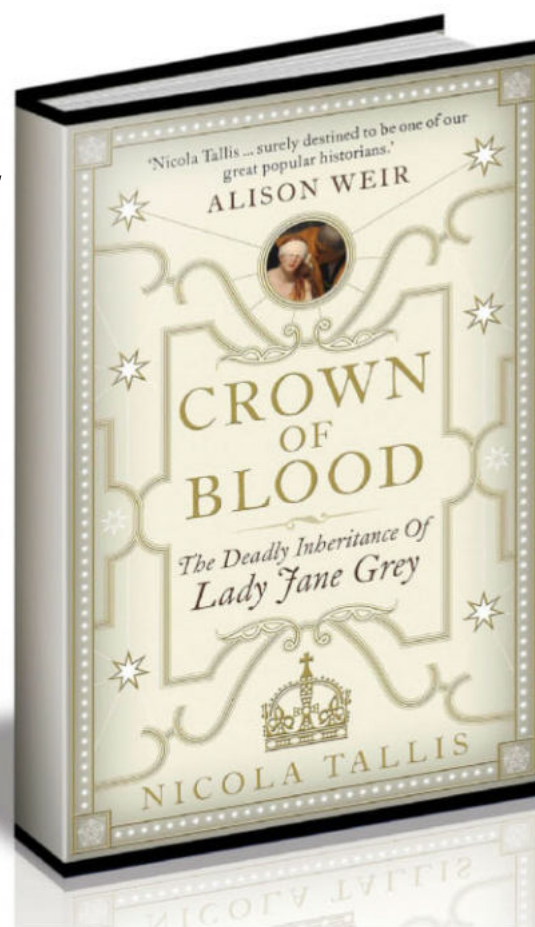
Still, the image that prevails when it comes to the Nine Day Queen is one of feminine helplessness, as depicted in Paul Delaroche's iconic and idealised painting of her about to be executed. Dressed in white, the blindfolded Jane is guided to the block - the innocent usurper that's often reduced to just a footnote.

After reading *Crown Of Blood*, however, you'll be convinced that Jane and her family need their own BBC series. Political power plays, double-crossings and the curse of royal blood make for a fascinating tale; never has the teenage Tudor seemed more alive than within the pages of this

biography. Historian Nicola Tallis draws upon a wealth of primary sources, focusing on the human and emotional aspects of Jane's story, as well as the titular deadly inheritance.

Possessing royal blood through her grandmother, Princess Mary Tudor, Jane was named heir to the throne in Henry VIII's will - if his children died childless - and there lay an opportunity for the power-hungry. With so many key characters intertwined in her fate, the author does a superb job of keeping the narrative accessible and untangled. Helpfully, there are also family trees for the houses of Tudor, Grey and Suffolk, a timeline and a selection of colour photos to refer to.

Crown Of Blood is not only the story of Jane Grey, but also those who she met along the way, from childhood to the scaffold. An informative and fascinating read, it speaks to a new generation of history enthusiasts that have been seduced by the scandals and intrigue of the Tudor dynasty.



STRANGE VICTORIANA

Tales of the curious, the weird and the uncanny from our Victorian ancestors

Author Jan Bondeson **Publisher** Amberley Publishing
Price £20 **Released** Out now

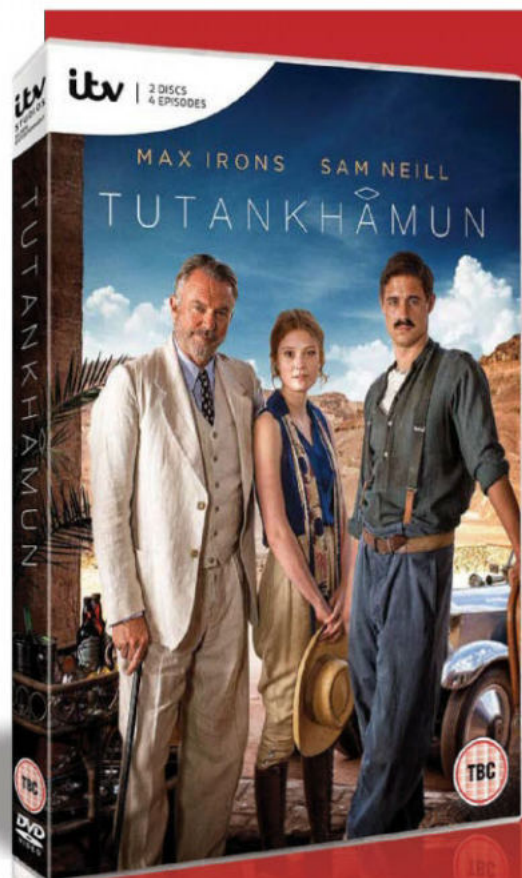
You can depend on the 19th century for a dip into the sensational, mysterious and macabre, and *Strange Victoriana* does not disappoint. Full of detailed and gruesome illustrations and stories from the *Illustrated Police News* (known as the worst newspaper in England at the time it was published), this book is an anthology of true-crime stories from the reign of Queen Victoria.

Having sourced a private collection of the *Illustrated Police News*, author Jan Bondeson began collating the fascinating accounts for a magazine feature in 2011, and such is the public's morbid curiosity - which doesn't seem to alter through the ages - that this was soon turned into a serial feature. This new release is a collection of the strangest and best that the *Illustrated Police News* has to offer.

From medical disasters and women being buried alive to curious serial murders and dogs bearing witness in court, Bondeson brings

together an eclectic mix of the most off-the-wall stories from an era that was characterised by strong moral principles and a strict social code of conduct. The tales contained within are intricately researched, presented through both the sensational headlines and original tabloid-esque drawings from the *Illustrated Police News*, and backed up (or indeed sometimes dispelled) with hard facts tracked down from many archives, databases, catalogues and libraries. The result is an intriguing image to peruse with often an even more fascinating story to read.

It's easy to see how the alluring headlines sold papers on the cobbles of Victorian London. Medical freaks, unexplained deaths, sleepwalking and scantily clad women, hauntings in graveyards, suicides, animal encounters, surgeries, autopsies and not to mention members of high society involved in scandal are the kind of juicy stories that entertain and delight loyal readers, both old and new.



TUTANKHAMUN

More desert Downton than detailed docu-drama

Creator Guy Burt, Peter Webber **Cast** Max Irons, Sam Neill, Amy Wren

Distributor ITV Studios Home Entertainment **Released** Out now on DVD

Destined to be a case study for the cultural historians of tomorrow, ITV's *Tutankhamun* - following the hunt for the remains of the boy king against a backdrop of the Great War and greater instability - is a classic example of post-*Downton Abbey* storytelling. Like *Downton*, the show barrels through history to leave tumultuous events a sidenote and their wider implications in the wind. Despite taking place across nearly two decades (in which the passage of time is mainly marked by a character transitioning from daughter to love interest), World War I and the rise of Arab nationalism serve primarily as off-screen inconveniences to Howard Carter (Max Irons) and Lord Carnarvon (Sam Neill) in their search for the tomb.

When they do push towards the foreground, events take on an altogether more distasteful tone. Egyptian authorities who believe that their

nation's antiquities should remain in the country, rather than be divvied up among the Anglo-American tomb raiders are depicted as petty-minded villains, while Howard Carter's supposed empathy for the Arabs transforms him into an embodiment of the white saviour trope.

Carter is depicted as a rebel and outsider whose unconventional methods pit him against the status quo, but only so much as *Downton Abbey*'s Cousin Matthew is a rebel for merely being a member of the privileged upper middle class as opposed to the privileged aristocracy.

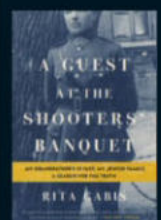
Those hoping that at its worst *Tutankhamun* would be a relatively simple retelling of real events with the gloss of period drama populism to spice things up will be very disappointed. For ITV, it seems, the discovery of Tutankhamun is simply another tomb to be robbed of its glittering geegaws while the real story is crushed under foot like so much pottery.

HISTORY WAR RECOMMENDS...

A Guest At The Shooters' Banquet

Author: Rita Gabis **Price:** £20

Publisher: Bloomsbury



Having discovered her grandfather may have been involved in wartime atrocities in Lithuania during World War II, Gabis embarked on a four-year journey in search of the truth. In

this autobiographical account of those years, she learns that he was directly involved in a gruesome massacre in the autumn of 1941, when 8,000 Jews were shot over the course of three days in the nearby killing field of Poligon. In publishing this intimate journey into the horrific world of the Holocaust in Lithuania, she helps us to better understand certain human micro-dynamics of the genocide that are all too often lost in debates about the Holocaust.

1847: A CHRONICLE OF GENIUS, GENEROSITY & SAVAGERY

The story of a year begs the question, why?

Author Turtle Bunbury **Publisher** Gill Books

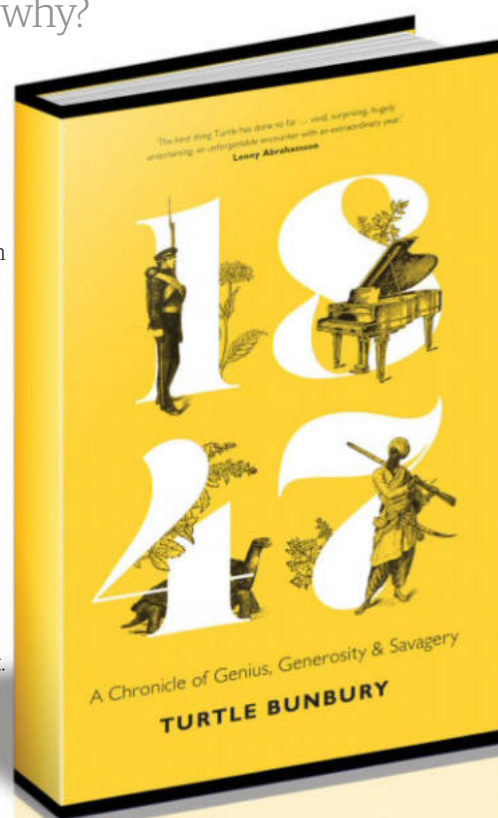
Price £19.99 **Released** Out now

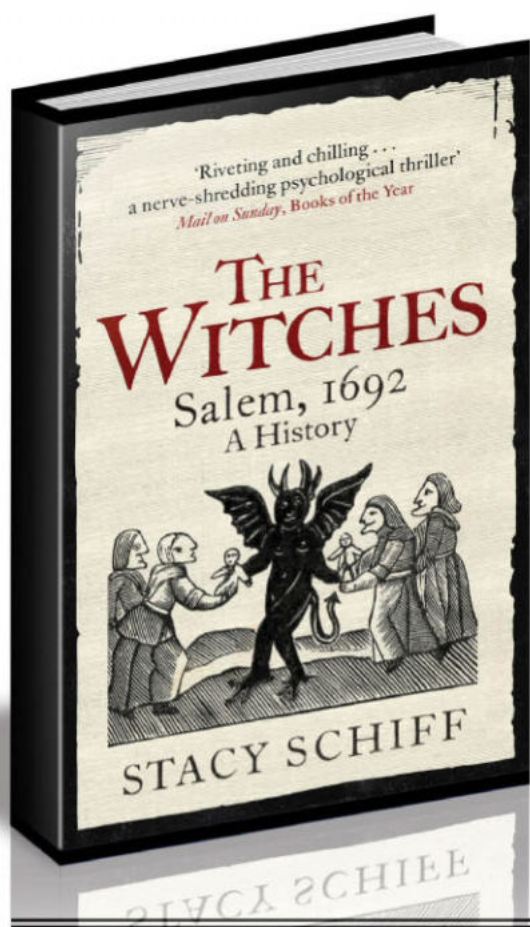
Surely such a name as Turtle Bunbury tells of parental genius. The question arises though: can the writer live up to his name? Almost. The title tells the tale. It's the story of a year, a year rendered significant for the author as the time when the building of his family home - a great pile of a place in County Carlow, Ireland - was begun.

It's not perhaps the most obvious time to start such a project, as Ireland was in the midst of the Great Famine that saw 1 million people die and 1 million more emigrate. But, as Bunbury shows, such a year will reverberate through the world, setting off ripples in all sorts of unexpected places. He follows the year through, telling

its history through the lives of people affected by the events that unfold. Some are Irish, part of the diaspora already gone from the island but, hearing the news, responding to it. Others merely share the calendar.

This is both the book's strength and weakness. It's a chronicle, connected only by time and, when finishing it, one is struck by the same thought that arises upon watching Stephen Fry on *QI*. Indeed, it's all very witty and sharp, but what exactly is the point? If wit and sharpness are reason enough, then buy this book: it will delight. If, on the other hand, you require some uniting, narrative thread for your explorations in the 19th century, read the *Flashman* books instead.





THE WITCHES: SALEM, 1692

Looking beyond the hysteria of Salem's darkest hours

Author Stacy Schiff **Publisher** Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Price £9.99 **Released** Out now

Receiving a timely reprint alongside Sony Pictures' optioning of the film rights, Stacy Schiff's *The Witches* recounts the infamous events of the 1692 Salem witch trials, from the first anguished cries of the afflicted to the final gasps of the condemned just nine months later. Schiff's skilfully woven narrative, though framed as a straight factual account, reads as a tense historical courtroom drama, painting a fascinating but grim picture of Puritan life and the devastation caused when fear, ignorance and superstition lead a community to turn on itself.

Where others have sought to identify the cause of the madness that gripped Massachusetts, Schiff's approach is less focused on the root of the evil and more on exploring the environment that allowed the flames of suspicion to spread as quickly, and as ferociously, as they did. Drawing primarily from ministers' journals and notes taken during court sessions, Schiff lays out the timeline

of growing communal hysteria and paranoia, while also highlighting the philosophical, cultural and social factors that defined the Puritan way of life and, with hindsight, clearly provided fuel for the developing fire.

Factual studies of the Salem trials invariably struggle to offer definitive answers, based as they are on sources that we know to be, at best, interpretive of the events around them, and at worst, wilfully negligent in accurately recording the testimony of those involved where it doesn't suit the author's personal views. *The Witches* acknowledges this challenge from the start. Instead what Schiff delivers is insight, her considered analysis of the source material and environment leaving little room for doubt over how events were able to escalate as they did, and her well-structured narrative defining a truly dark, though mercifully brief, period in history that continues to fascinate as much as it horrifies.

PETER & DAN SNOW'S TREASURES OF BRITISH HISTORY

2,000 years of history told through 50 key documents

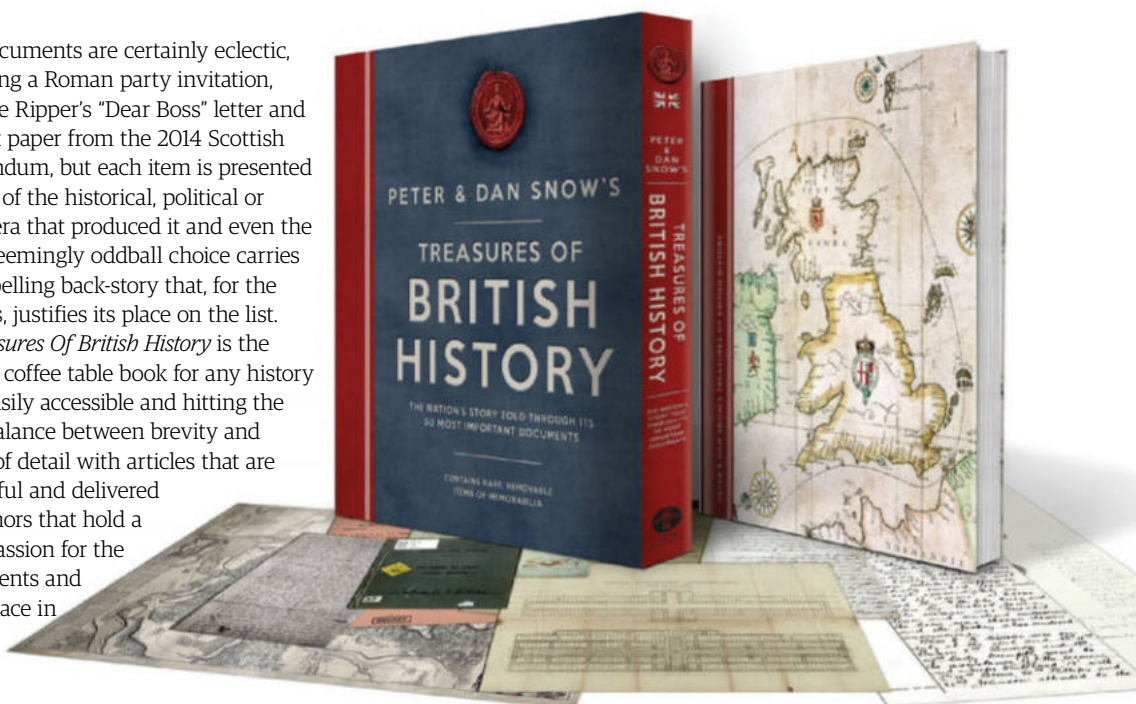
Authors Peter & Dan Snow **Publisher** Andre Deutsch **Price** £30 **Released** Out now

“We are blessed in Britain to have such a rich and ancient collection of treasures... Collectively they tell us who we are. Where we are. How we got here.” *Peter And Dan Snow's Treasures Of British History* is a collection of 50 such treasures - of the written variety - that encapsulated, or steered, key moments in the development of Great Britain from its days as an inclement group of islands under Roman occupation to its modern status as a major power on the world stage.

As might be expected, it's very much a personal collection. As a reader, you might not agree with the inclusion of everything in this top 50, but it's hard to deny the individual significance of any one piece, and the authors put forward strong cases for each without letting themselves become overly sentimental.

The documents are certainly eclectic, including a Roman party invitation, Jack the Ripper's "Dear Boss" letter and a ballot paper from the 2014 Scottish Referendum, but each item is presented as part of the historical, political or social era that produced it and even the most seemingly oddball choice carries a compelling back-story that, for the authors, justifies its place on the list.

Treasures Of British History is the perfect coffee table book for any history buff; easily accessible and hitting the right balance between brevity and depth of detail with articles that are insightful and delivered by authors that hold a clear passion for the documents and their place in British history.



HISTORY ANSWERS

Send your questions to questions@historyanswers.co.uk



The Battle of Crécy in 1346 was one of the most important battles during the first part of the Hundred Years' War

CHARLES THE BOLD

Nationality: French
Born-died: 10 November 1433
- 5 January 1477

Brief Bio

Charles was the duke of Burgundy from 1467 to 1477 and one of the wealthiest and most powerful nobles in Europe. His failed attempt to drag his brother-in-law, Edward IV of England, into a war against France might have extended the Hundred Years' War by at least another 20 years.

What is seppuku?

Jesse Reed

Meaning "cutting the belly", seppuku was a form of ritual suicide used by Japanese samurai and daimyo. It was used as a way of avoiding capture or torture, or to avoid disgrace after a defeat. As the spirit was thought to reside in the stomach, the samurai believed this act would release their spirit into the afterlife.

Seppuku began in the 12th century and initially it was a solo act. The samurai would plunge a knife or short sword into his belly, make a deep horizontal slice and then stab himself in the throat. By the 17th century, it had become more ritualised and a trusted second would be standing by to deliver the killing blow by chopping through the back of the neck with a sword. This was a skilled job because the intention was to leave the head partially attached, known as kaishaku.

In reality, this act was more often used as a form of capital punishment for samurai who had committed crimes, rather than as a method of suicide. It was abolished as a punishment in 1873.



This ritual suicide was slow and painful, but considered an honourable way to die

How long was the Hundred Years' War?

Beverly Parker

It is normally counted from 1337 - when Philip VI of France confiscated the duchy of Aquitaine from Edward III - to the Battle of Castillon in 1453, for a total of 116 years. However, the first major battle of the war didn't take place until three years after the 'war' began, in 1340, and France and England remained officially at war for 20 years after the last battle. In fact, fighting almost broke out again in 1474 when the Duke of Burgundy

tried to enlist the help of the English to fight against Louis XI of France.

The term 'Hundred Years' War' is just a convenient label used by modern historians to group a long-running series of battles between England and France. The whole war spanned five generations of kings and included two periods in the middle in which there wasn't any fighting for years. Calling it a single war is like referring to 1914-45 as the 'Thirty Years' War.

This day in history 8 December

1660

First English actress

Margaret Hughes is the first woman to appear on the English stage, after Charles II issues a royal warrant that female roles must be played by women. She plays Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

1792

First US cremation

Henry Laurens was an American merchant and slave trader. After his death aged 69, his funeral is the first formal cremation in the US. The nation's first crematorium wasn't built until 1876.



1813

Premiere of Beethoven's 7th

At a charity concert in Vienna, for soldiers wounded during the Napoleonic Wars, Ludwig van Beethoven conducts the first performance of *Symphony No. 7 In A Major*, remarking afterwards that it was one of his best.

1854

Immaculate Conception proclaimed

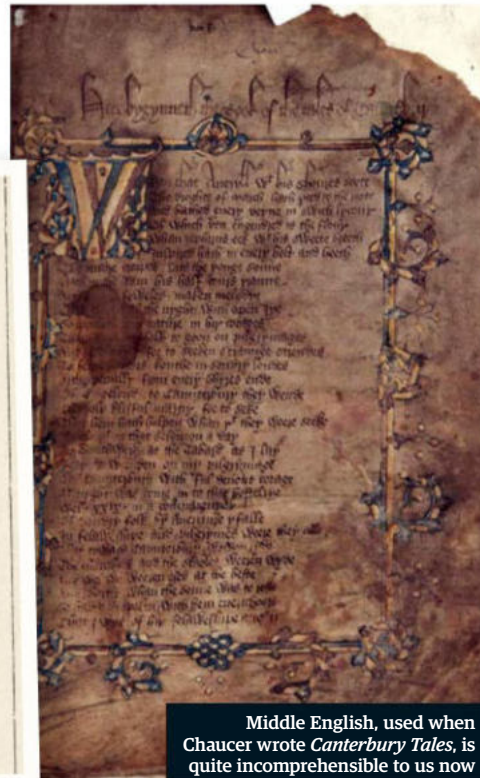
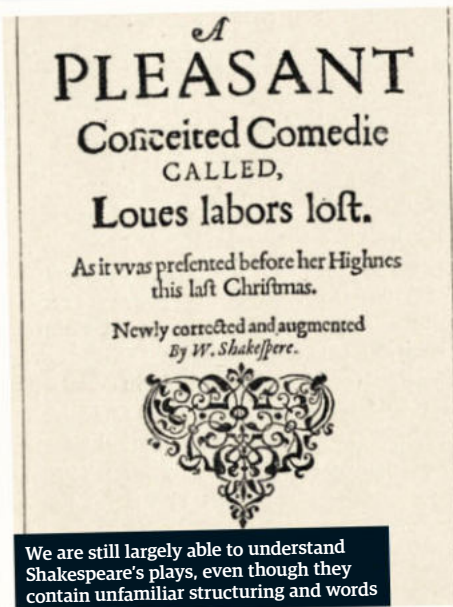
Pope Pius IX establishes the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. This says that Mary, mother of Jesus, was conceived free from the Original Sin that everyone else inherits from Adam and Eve.



How far back in time could I travel and still understand the English spoken then?

Teresa Bell

Probably less than 300 years. You might think you would be fairly comfortable with Shakespeare's English around 1600, but this is only because we normally hear his plays performed with modern pronunciation. In the last four centuries, accents and vowel sounds have shifted significantly. Two thirds of Shakespeare's sonnets have rhymes in them that don't work in modern English - 'proved' rhymes with 'loved', for example, and 'hour' and 'whore' were pronounced the same. Without the familiar characters and storylines to guide us, it would be very difficult to follow the speech of a Tudor Londoner.



YOUR TWEETS

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I use **All About History** for my teaching! Especially anytime you have information related to Nazi Germany & revolutions. @Sisskind

I use the magazine for drawing lessons from conflict in my Ancient History class. But, mostly read it for pleasure. @don_osborne

I use it for both teaching a pleasure. I leave copies for students to use for researching assessments too @CRTHistoryClub

This thread highlighting some of what's wrong with Buzzfeed is amazing. @smeagols_twin

This is my favourite thread of all time. @AboutHistoryMag @fatherbananas



What is the history of the handshake?

Joseph Cook

The earliest handshakes that we know of date to 1800 BCE. Babylonian kings would grasp the hands of a statue of the god Marduk at an annual ceremony to reconfirm their right to rule. While shaking hands is often assumed to have begun as a way to demonstrate that you weren't holding a weapon, this gesture is probably much older than that. Even chimpanzees have been seen to hold hands, and the formal handshake probably grew out of this much more instinctive gesture.



Did King George I have a love rival murdered? Find out at...
historyanswers.co.uk

1922

Northern Ireland leaves

After the Irish War of Independence, the Anglo-Irish Treaty established the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. Two days after it was signed, Northern Ireland opts out.



1956

Vanguard TV-O

The United States Naval Research Laboratory launches the first Vanguard rocket, called Test Vehicle Zero, on a suborbital trajectory as the US and USSR race to be the first to put a satellite in orbit.

1980

Lennon murdered

At 10.50pm, Mark Chapman fires five shots from a .38 revolver, hitting former Beatle John Lennon four times, outside the Dakota apartment building in New York City. Chapman is currently serving a life sentence.

1987

IRNF Treaty

US President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev sign the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, agreeing to destroy their stockpiles of missiles with ranges under 5,500 kilometres. This doesn't include sea-launched missiles.



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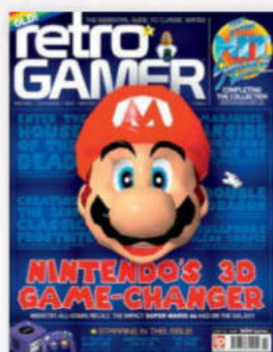
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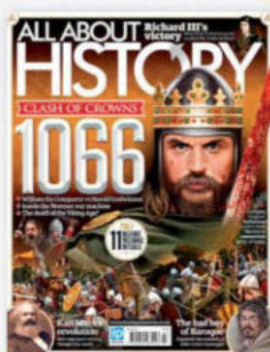
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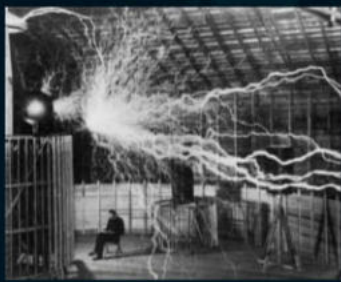
NEXT ISSUE

What does the future hold for All About History?



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Distributed in the UK, Eire & the Rest of the World by
Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
☎ 0203 787 9060 www.marketforce.co.uk

Distributed in Australia by Gordon & Gotch Australia Pty Ltd,
26 Rodborough Road, Frenchs Forest, New South Wales 2086
☎ +61 2 9972 8800 www.gordongotch.com.au

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ISSN 2052-5870



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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
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HISTORY HOLLYWOOD

Fact versus fiction on the silver screen

CLEOPATRA



Director: Joseph L. Mankiewicz Starring: Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison Country: US Released: 1963

This sword and sandals epic will dazzle you with its lavish grandeur

VERDICT Minor hiccups don't stop this opulent film from being historically on point.

WHAT THEY GOT WRONG...

01 Cleopatra's death has been romanticised for centuries, with an asp bite thought to have finished the queen off. Experts say that this method would have been slow and painful, so it's more probable the queen would have taken her life with poison.

02 The Egyptian and Roman sets combine architecture from many different periods, making for a display of an odd jumble of styles. Also the Arch of Constantine that can be seen wasn't built until 300 years after Cleopatra's death and doesn't stand in the forum.

03 While Caesarion was Caesar's son, we don't have any proof that Caesar ever considered him a legitimate heir. Caesar adopted Octavian as his rightful heir, which was considered proper and was a common occurrence in Roman culture at the time.

04 While Cleopatra is only shown as having one child in the film, she in fact went on to have three more with Mark Antony. The twins Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene II were born in 40 BCE with Ptolemy Philadelphus following in 36 BCE.

WHAT THEY GOT RIGHT...

Excluding the myriad of small errors, *Cleopatra* does a fine job of capturing the dramatic story and cutthroat politics of the queen's reign. Her relationships with both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony are brought to life through Elizabeth Taylor's acting, with Cleopatra's strong will and character shining through.



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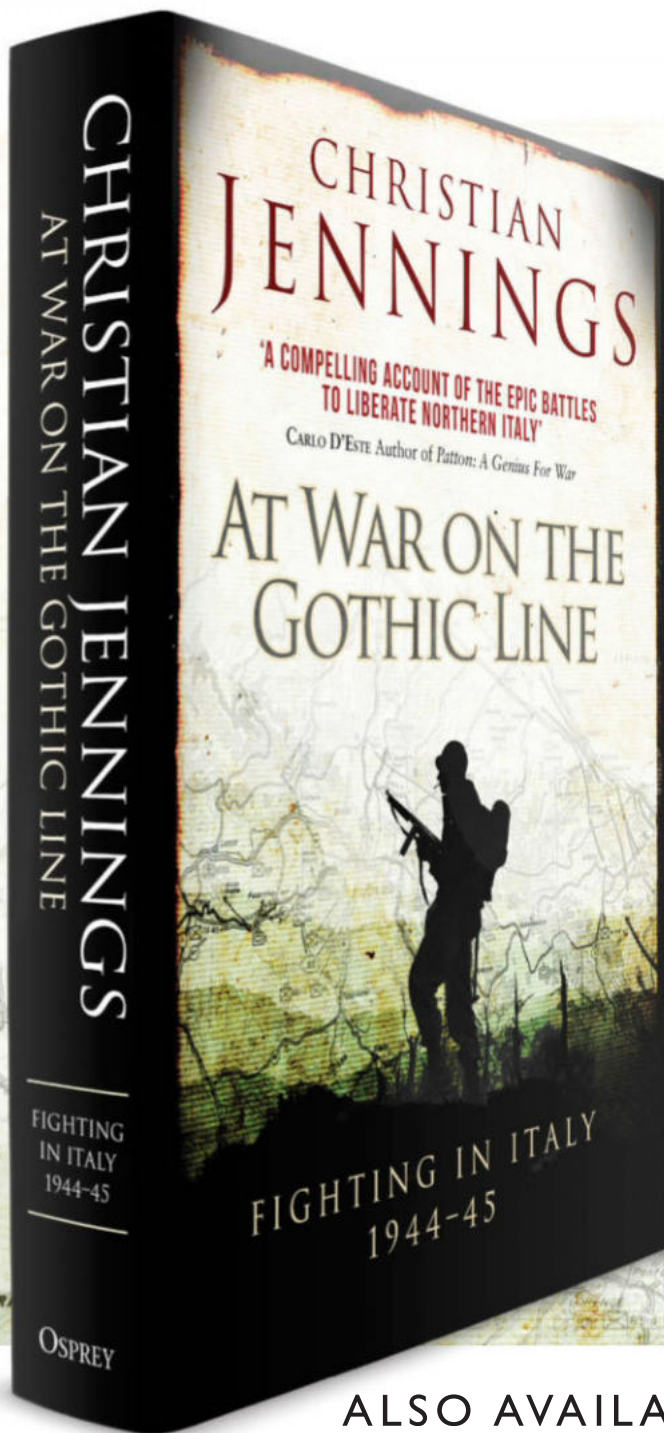
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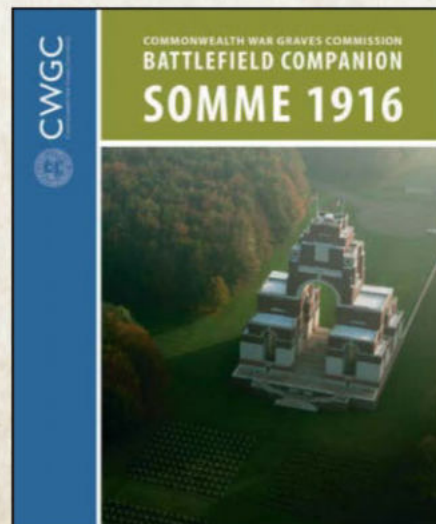
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